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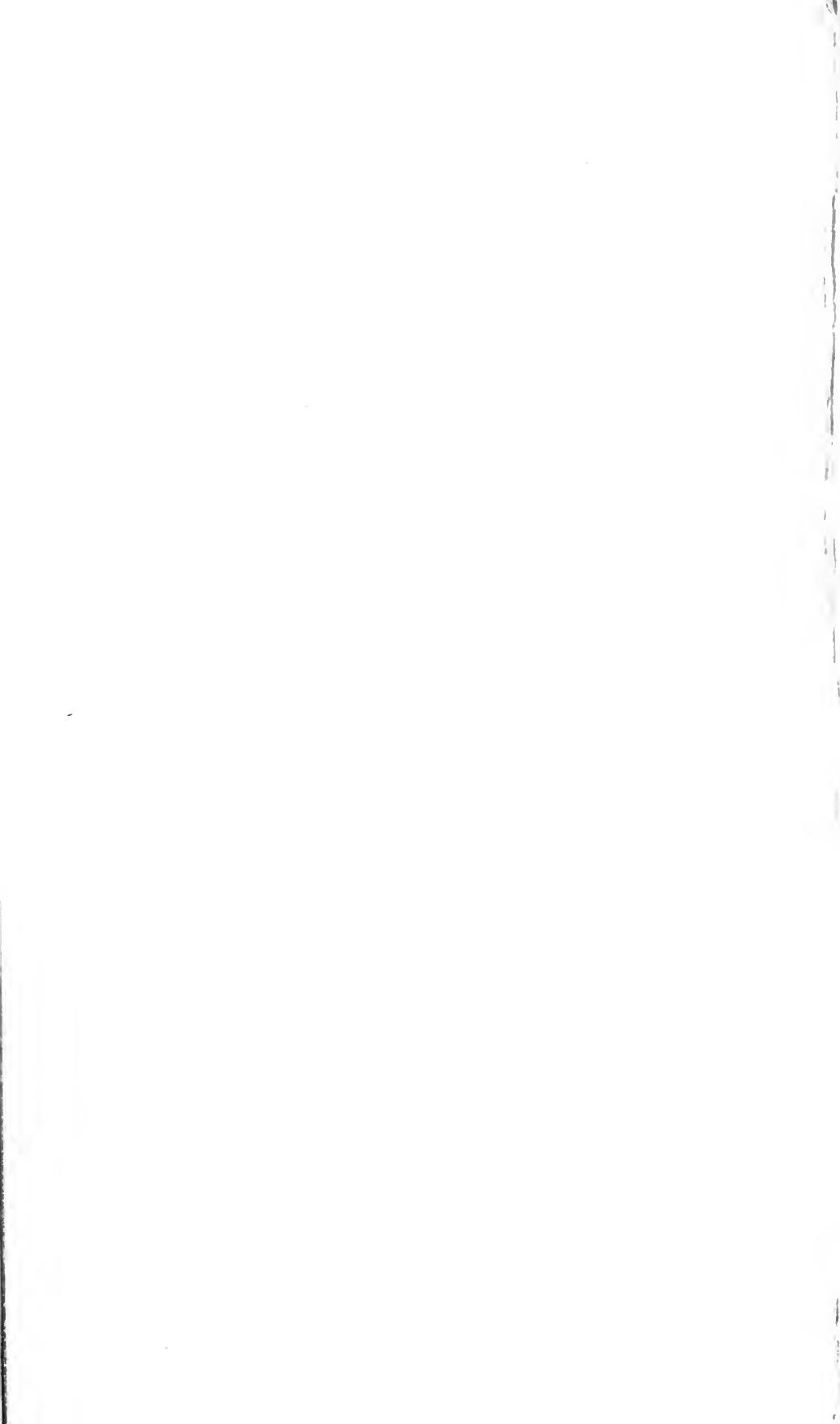
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Mr. Elkes,
For his third
R E M A R K S, by Candall

ON THE

First Part of a Book,

ENTITLED

"THE AGE OF REASON,"

ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS PAINÉ,

ITS AUTHOR.

— 14 — 15 —

By S. DREW,

OF ST. AUSTLE, CORNWALL.

“ It were to be wished, that the enemies of religion would at least bring themselves to apprehend its nature, before they opposed its authority.”

ADDISON.

“ The good and evil of eternity, are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.”

JOHNSON.

Second Edition,

REVISED, AND CONSIDERABLY ENLARGED.

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P R E F A C E.



WHEN civilized nations adopt a profaneness of manners, under a pretence of throwing off mental restraints, it is but natural for a thinking mind to inquire into the occasion, on a larger scale than the mere action presents. The deeds which we perceive, confine our observations; but a retrospection on the past, and a calculation on the future, will open sources of information, on human conduct, which the visibility of things cannot afford. Between the past, the present, and the future, in every thing of a moral nature, there is a close and an intimate connexion; for, as future events are, in a great degree, produced by present

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actions, so present actions are occasioned by causes, which, from their relation to their own results, may be known with a tolerable degree of certainty.

When we behold the profaneness of manners, and the contempt of things sacred, which prevail; and notice that practical disregard of every moral principle, which, in many instances, is but too conspicuous; we cannot but inquire into the cause or causes, which have conspired to produce these effects, and into the consequences, of which they seem to be the ominous presages. The former, no doubt, are variously combined; but, how diverse soever they may be in their operations, they all unite to establish mental anarchy, and to prepare the mind for the reception of principles correspondent with that practice which is already established.

To this practice, the nature of which is too conspicuous, great pains have lately

been taken, to add the establishment of infidelity in theory. To these attempts, the dominion of vice gives but too many facilities, of which those, whose aim is to disseminate the fatal opiate, know but too well how to avail themselves. How far they have been successful, on this wicked errand, I take not upon me to determine. I can, nevertheless, easily satisfy myself, that, in proportion as infidelity takes root in the mind, those principles, by which vice is counteracted, will be eradicated, and iniquity, founded upon sanctions of public opinion, like a destructive torrent, will inundate the civil and the religious world.

I would not, however, insinuate from hence, that every Deist in theory must be immoral in practice; because I frequently observe the contrary: but I am satisfied, that morality cannot arise from principles of infidelity. It is possible for men to derive a practice from principles which Deism derides, and to attribute the effect to causes

which are incapable of producing it; but, in proportion as infidelity gains dominion over the human mind, these restraints will lose their influence on practice; and, as immoral actions can be supported by custom, or rendered familiar by repetition, sophistical reasoning will be sufficient to preserve its abettors from conscientious remorse.

As the interests of morality are made the sole pretence for the propagation of Deism, it is a question, which I would seriously propose to all its advocates,— *Whether it should not be propagated on those principles which it affects to recommend.* That this is not the case is attested by fact. And hence it affords room for something more than mere suspicion, that its primary design is to annihilate Revelation, without giving to mankind a substitute in its stead. Of this fact, the “Age of Reason” furnishes but too many proofs; and it is this circumstance that

has partially induced me to make some Remarks on the first part of that book. My aim, in the following pages, has been, to point out such principles as I conceive to be evidently false ; to detect some conclusions which are clearly erroneous ; and to animadvert on some sophisms, on which much of its popularity is founded. How far I have succeeded in my attempt, those who read this little Volume must decide. I am not conscious of having been actuated by selfish or interested views ; and I leave the rectitude of my intentions to that God, from whose judgment there is no appeal.

Deism appears to me to have but little to recommend it. It claims its existence on the fancied inconsistencies which it discovers in religious creeds, without having one original virtue to entitle it to respect. It is a system of negatives, if system that may be called, whose only boast is, that it discovers errors in Revelation ; and hence it assumes a title to credit, by instructing its votaries

to disbelief. Under the influence of this pure negation of excellence, it promotes its interests on the irritation of those passions which it should be the business of our lives to subdue, and fortifies itself in the strange commotions which it contributes to raise. These are some of the errors which I have designed to meet. But I am not warranted in commenting on my own Observations. Such as they are, I commit them to the world, and earnestly recommend them to the candour and attention of those to whom I now appeal. It is the first time that I ever attempted to assume the character of Author; and, without dedication or patron, I abandon these Remarks to their fate.

S. DREW.

September, 1799.

INTRODUCTORY NARRATION,

ADDRESSED TO

THE READERS

OF

THE SECOND EDITION.



THE following Remarks, on the First Part of Paine's "Age of Reason," were originally printed in the year 1799; and the edition, which, in its circulation, was chiefly confined to the County of Cornwall, was speedily sold. The flattering manner in which the Pamphlet was received, and the honourable notice which it obtained in the Anti-jacobin Review, would have more than justified another impression; but, as the tide of public opinion, in favour of the "Age of Reason," had begun to ebb, and this being the first time that the Author of the Remarks had presumed to

appear in print, he was content, that his Remarks should remain within those narrow confines for which they were primarily intended. The recent attempts, however, which have been made, to disseminate, among the lower classes of society, the principles inculcated in the “Age of Reason;” and the daring front which infidelity has lately assumed in the person of Mr. Carlyle and others, in the face of a British court of judicature, the Author hopes, will furnish to every friend of civil society, of Christian doctrines, and of Christian morals, a sufficient apology for the reappearance of this little Treatise, which originally started into existence under the following circumstances.

A young gentleman, by profession a surgeon, had, for a considerable time, been in habits of intimacy with the Author; and their conversation frequently turned on abstract theories, the nature of evidence, under given circumstances, and the primary source of moral principles. The young gentleman had made himself acquainted with the writings of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of Gibbon, and of Hume, whose

speculations had led him to look with a suspicious eye on the Sacred Records, to which he well knew the Author was strongly attached. When Paine's "Age of Reason" made its appearance, he procured it; and fortifying himself with the objections against Revelation, which that book contained, he assumed a bolder tone, and commenced an undisguised attack on the Bible.

On finding the Author willing to hear his objections fairly stated, and more disposed to repel them by fair argument, than opprobrious epithets and wild exclamations, he one day asked him, if he had ever seen the "Age of Reason;" and, on being answered in the negative, he offered to lend it, upon condition, that the Author would engage to peruse it attentively, and give his opinion, with candour, on the various parts which passed under his inspection. These preliminaries being settled, the "Age of Reason" was put into the Author's hands, and he proceeded in its examination, with all the ability of which he was possessed, and with all the expedition that his avocations would allow.

During this period, scarcely a day elapsed, in which they did not meet, and turn their attention to the principles of the “Age of Reason,” which the Author controverted, and the young gentleman defended. In this controversy, no undue advantage was taken, on either side. An inadvertent expression each was at liberty to recall; and the ground was abandoned, when it was fairly found to be no longer tenable. The various arguments, to which these colloquial debates gave birth, were occasionally committed to writing, which, being collected together, and augmented with additional observations, now stand embodied in the little Treatise to which this account is prefixed.

The young gentleman, finding that the Author’s attachment to Revelation was not to be shaken, recalled the “Age of Reason,” under avowed suspicions, that the arguments it contained, were more vulnerable, than, when he lent it, he had been induced to believe. Shortly afterwards, these Remarks were published, as already stated; but, that the form in which they appeared might not create surmises,

calculated to excite unpleasant feelings, nothing of conversation or dialogue was retained. They were addressed immediately to the Author of the “Age of Reason,” then alive, in the same manner as they are now presented to the world.

The young gentleman, who is now in eternity, and, therefore, cannot be affected by this relation, continued, for some time, to waver in uncertainty. He had embraced infidelity; and he hesitated to abandon the object of his choice, though he candidly confessed, he was unable either to defend its principles, or to avert the consequences to which they must inevitably lead. In this state of fluctuation, his mind continued, for some time; his attachment growing less and less sanguine; until his suspicions were transferred from the Bible to the “Age of Reason,” and his confidence in Thomas Paine was happily exchanged, for a more pleasing confidence in the authenticity of Divine Revelation.

When this alteration in his views had taken place, he did not hesitate to acknowledge, that his design,

in lending the “Age of Reason” to the Author, was, under the hope, that he should be successful in proselyting him to the principles of infidelity; but that, being disappointed in his expectation, his mind became perplexed; and he soon found that his attempt had produced an effect exactly the reverse of what he had intended. Shortly afterwards, he was taken ill; and, after languishing for some months, in a decline, his mortal remains were carried to the “house appointed for all living.” This change, and this conviction, which the Author believes accompanied him to his death, he attributed, almost exclusively, to the causes which have been assigned; which, awakening his mind to deliberate reflection, directed it to explore those distant issues and consequences, which infidelity does not instruct its votaries or victims to survey.

It is a possible case, that many may, at this moment, be precisely in the situation of the above young gentleman, when he lent the “Age of Reason” to the Author. The pride of intellect finds gratification in deviating from the creed of the vulgar;

without adverting to those awful realities, which eternity only can unfold. Sanctioned by the professions, and fascinated with the conduct, of the sprightly, the daring, the profligate, and the gay, it is much to be feared, that multitudes renounce Revelation, and embrace infidelity, without fairly examining the principles of either. In the former, they had nothing, but a nominal assent, to lose; and the latter they embrace, rather to ensure a fashionable countenance, than from any sincere conviction that they are acting a rational part.

Independently of the additions which have been made, in this edition, on some occasions a change of words has been introduced, to render sentences more expressive, and to give distinctness and perspicuity to those ideas which were intended to be conveyed. In most other respects, the arguments remain in the same connexions in which they originally appeared, except where, on re-examination, more mature reflection has dictated the necessity of an alteration.

Of late, the poison of infidelity has been so copiously administered, as to call for legislative interference; and, to prevent its baneful effects, every antidote is necessary. Should the republication of this little volume, produce in any one, an effect, similar to that which has been mentioned, the Author will rejoice to find that it has not been reprinted in vain.

February, 1820.

REMARKS

ON

"THE AGE OF REASON,"

ADDRESSED

To THOMAS PAINE.



A SHORT time since, an acquaintance of mine favoured me with a sight of your book, entitled, "The Age of Reason."

From the celebrity of its Author, the title which it bore, and the various reports which had been circulated respecting it, my expectations were greatly raised; and I began to read it, with that eagerness of curiosity, which such circumstances are calculated to excite.

I have now finished the perusal. I have investigated, with all the candour and attention of which I was capable, every observation which I conceived worthy of notice, in the first part of your book; and, to the utmost of my power, have examined the force

of these endowments to be exceedingly low; otherwise, even presumption itself could hardly have persuaded you, that all, which had been held sacred for ages, by millions of the human species, among whom are many of the most exalted genius and most splendid talents that have ever adorned our common nature, was to disappear, in a moment, before the production of your pen.

With thinking people, you have forfeited a considerable portion of your reputation, by the irreverent manner of writing which you have adopted, and, through a mode of reasoning as singular as your principles are daring, by inferring, from the sources of religion, the vices of its professors. Among those, in whom the unholy passions of human nature are predominant, there can be no doubt, that your book will find a favourable reception; but it is not to your literary advantage, to reflect, that the ferocity of those passions, to which you appeal, can never be subdued by any specific which the "Age of Reason" supplies; but that it may be found in another Book, which the "Age of Reason" was written to destroy.

The first observation, in your pamphlet, on which I shall make any remark, is in page 4, where you define "*a church, whether Christian, Jewish, or Mahometan,*" to be "*something set up to terrify and enslave mankind.*" My chief reason for quoting

this passage is, to compare it with what follows, in the same page, where you call the connexion between church and state "*adulterous*." On this I observe, religion must be either true or false; if true, your definition cannot be right; if false, the connexion between church and state cannot be *adulterous*. For if it be "an institution invented "to monopolize power and profit," its design must be to promote that end. However it acts, or in what form soever it operates, it still preserves its proper place, provided it keeps that end in view. How then can any connexion, or alliance it may form, be adulterous, during the progress of its operation, and while it degenerates not from the first design of its institution. You say, "*The adulterous connexion between church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, had effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds.*" How, Sir, does this affect Revelation? It is not because right principles have been violated, that they are to be abandoned. The evils you mention, originate in a *departure* from the principles of Revelation, and not an obedience to, nor an application of them.

What would you think, in a civil sense, if a mad revolutionist were to apply your principles, of the equality of man, to an indiscriminate system of

rapine and plunder; to break down all order in civil society; to seize the property of industrious individuals, to which the former possessors alone had a right? What would you say in reply, if your principles were charged with such acts of indiscriminate atrocity? Would you not contend, that these things arose from a misunderstanding, or a misapplication, or a wilful perversion of your principles; or would you not think yourself unjustly charged with such enormities as I have mentioned, because you asserted the equality of the human race? Unless I am greatly deceived, these things will apply to the case in hand. You charge the pains and penalties of intolerance on that system which is exactly the reverse, and to which it is totally unknown. If there be those, whom you accuse, in the end of your book, with the ignorance of blending doctrine with authenticity, I think you are equally chargeable with blending the principles of Christianity with the vices of those who have departed from them. When you can prove, either by rational argument, or passages of Scripture, that Christianity inculcates a spirit of intolerance, then, and not till then, will I allow your charge to be just.

In page 5, you define Revelation to be "*something immediately communicated from God to man;*" you then add, "*It is a contradiction in terms to call any thing a revelation, which comes to us second*

"handed, either verbally, or in writing. *Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication.*" I think it is obvious, that God, according to the present constitution of creation, cannot render himself visible to our bodily organs, without interrupting the course of nature; nor can it be, that material organs can discern spiritual and incorporeal essences. Agreeably to this principle, we find a correspondence of facts; and, if we take analogy for our guide, we may reasonably presume, that this truth is of universal application. As it is certain, that God never has, in the effulgence of his glory, rendered himself visible to our bodily organs, so it is highly probable, that he never can thus communicate to us any knowledge of himself, without granting a proportionate assistance to our intellects and senses, or without imparting new powers, wholly distinct from those which we now possess. All our knowledge of God must, therefore, necessarily require some *medium* or other; and, consequently, as this will prevent the intercourse from being *immediate*, there neither is, nor can be, such an *immediate communication* from God, as you require, within the reach of possibility. In the natural world, he

" Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
" Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees."

And, in the moral, whether an angel from heaven should be sent to declare his will, or the dictates

of omnipotence should be impressed upon the conscience; whether tables of stone should transmit the Divine command, or the human intellect should be selected for the important purpose; in either case, a medium of communication will appear.

Now, a communication from God, abstracted from all mediums, would not be oral or written Revelation, but *sensible proof*; and sensible proof, I have already argued, is impossible in our present state; and nothing besides can be immediate. And, if the immediateness of Revelation be destroyed, it must, admitting it to exist, necessarily pass beyond the first communication. That sensible proof is necessarily limited to the first communication, I readily admit; but with oral or written Revelation, the case is quite otherwise. Had the Bible recommended itself to us, on the evidence of *sensation*, and yet withheld that evidence on which it rested, your observations would have been just, that “*it is a contradiction in terms, to call any thing a SENSATION, after the first communication;*” and that “*it is necessarily limited to the first communication.*” If Revelation be, what you say, (and what I believe,) “*a communication of something, which we knew not before,*” there is no necessity of limiting it to the first, nor to the second communication; but it may run parallel with that ignorance, which its design was to remove.

After having, in page 5, necessarily excluded from the idea of Revelation *all who are not within the limits of the first communication*, you say, page 12, “*Revelation cannot be applied to any thing done upon earth, of which man is either the actor or witness.*” Now, how any Revelation can be possible, on your principles, I know not; for, if it be a “contradiction, to call any thing a Revelation, after ‘the first communication,’ all, who are *not present*, must, of necessity, be excluded; and, of course, none, but such as are within the reach of the first communication, can have any Revelation. But when you say, “*Nothing can be a Revelation, of which man is either the actor or witness,*” you completely exclude all who are *present*; for it is impossible for any thing to be revealed to me, and yet leave me without any knowledge of it: and with my knowledge, I am the witness, to myself, of that Revelation. But, if my being a witness, necessarily destroys Revelation to me, and Revelation be destroyed in those who are absent, because they are without witness, you leave nobody to whom a Revelation is possible. And yet you say, page 5, “*No one can doubt, but God can make such a communication, if he please.*” How these contradictions are to be reconciled, I leave you to determine; and until this shall be done, I cannot but conclude, that, the different parts of your argument militate against each other, and conspire to overthrow the whole.

Assuming it then as an unquestionable fact, that, God makes himself known always through mediums, the next thing to be considered is, Who has the just right of selecting them for his purposes? It must be either man, or God; but I will not draw the conclusion,—It must be God. These things being premised, I ask, Who, sir, gave you authority to prescribe to the Almighty, the means and instruments of his communication? To say, that God shall be limited in his actions, by finite intelligences, is to deprive him of omnipotence. If he has not the power of selecting the modes of his own communication, he cannot be omnipotent; for I consider every thing, when applied to God, to be within his power to accomplish, except what is *absolutely* impossible. Now, if God had thought proper to communicate a Revelation of his will to the human race, the universe lay before him, to take what instrument he pleased, to make subservient to his benign purpose; and, consequently, he had as much liberty to select the human intellect, for his purpose, as he had the planetary worlds; for, if the human intellect be objectionable, because liable to fraud and imposture, the planetary worlds are equally objectionable, because liable to misinterpretation, and because unintelligible to the greater part of the human race. If, therefore, it is irrational, in us, to discard the thing communicated, merely because we happen to dislike the medium of communication, the absurdity of your

conduct must be obvious, in rejecting Revelation, merely because you cannot discover how God can make it pass beyond the bounds of the first communication.

Before you thus acted, it might not have been amiss, if you had inquired, whether a more immediate Revelation, than that which we conceive God to have given, were within the reach of possibility; even if you had not defined the nature of that, with which you would have been satisfied. A Revelation, I presume, to please you, must be, for ever, in a state of actual communication. In all the ages that are to come, as well as in all that are past, a state of equal exhibition must be necessary; and the present generation must partake of the common evidence; which must be alike intelligible to the meanest capacity, and the most exalted intellect; otherwise, you will object, that "the way to God is not open to all alike."

Whether it would have been more easy for God, according to our local ideas of ease and difficulty, to render the material creation universally intelligible, to every capacity, than to make written Revelation subservient to his purpose, and to preserve that Revelation, from corruption, through the progress of time, seems to be a question, on which we have no right to speculate. I think, that both

must be equally possible, when applied to God; nor can I conceive, that it implies "a contradiction in terms, to call any thing a Revelation, after the first communication."

That God should be able, if he so pleased, to make the human intellect the primitive vehicle, and written Revelation the medium of his communications to man, no one has a right to doubt, who will allow the Divine Being to possess infinite power; unless he can make it appear, that the supposition includes contradictory ideas; and this I conceive, no one will presume to undertake. And, consequently, the same power can, with equal ease, preserve a Revelation of his will, thus communicated, from all corruptions, through all the ages of the world. If, indeed, from the perfection of your knowledge, you can demonstrate, that these mediums are incapable of being made, by Almighty Power and Wisdom, the instruments through which God can communicate his will to mankind, then, and not till then, will it appear to be "a contradiction in terms, to call any thing a Revelation after the first communication."

In page 6, you have introduced a kind of narrative, of your own fabrication, with an artifice calculated to excite contempt; but, with thinking people, that contempt will rather rest on its author, than on that Revelation which it was written to expose.

You say, “*It is curious to observe, how the theory of what is called the Christian church, sprang out of the tail of the Heathen mythology.*” That your curiosity should be excited, when you think a favourable opportunity presents itself, of bringing the Bible into disrepute, is not a matter that excites much surprise; but evidence, that would connect your allegations with truth, would prove more satisfactory than an expression of curiosity. But so contrary to fact is this assertion, that we find no more than two or three quotations, from any Heathen author, in all the New Testament, and these are merely moral sentences; while the Old Testament is quoted and alluded to about five hundred times. As a proof of my assertion, I beg leave to lay before you the following passages, as a specimen.

OLD TESTAMENT COMPARED WITH THE NEW.

<i>Place of Christ's nativity,</i>	Micah v. 2.....	Matt. ii. 6.
<i>Birth of Christ,</i>	Isaiah vii. 14.	Matt. i. 23.
<i>Entry into Jerusalem,</i>	Zech. ix. 9.	Matt. xxi. 5.
<i>Passion of Christ,</i>	Psalm xxii. 16—18.	John xix. 24.
<i>Resurrection,</i>	Psalm xvi. 10.	Acts ii. 24.
<i>Ascension,</i>	Psalm lxxviii. 18...	Ephes. iv. 8.
<i>Right hand of God</i>	Psalm cx. 1.....	Heb. i. 13.

These predictions, and their accomplishment, are in such accordance with each other, that we can no more deny them, than we can render them

inapplicable to Christ, without involving ourselves in absurdity.

Nor does it appear, that either the Stoics, or the Epicureans, in the days of the Apostles, were acquainted with the discovery which you have made. By these, Paul was accused, with being “a setter forth of strange Gods,” when he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.* And for this offence, he was taken and brought unto the Areopagus, and charged with bringing strange things to their ears.

Should this evidence be rejected, because drawn from that Book, of which you profess to doubt the authenticity, permit me to call your attention to the observations of one, whom you will scarcely suspect of partiality.

“ I will confess to you farther, that the majesty
“ of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as
“ the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my
“ heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers :
“ with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how
“ contemptible, are they, compared with the Scrip-
“ tures! Is it possible, that a Book, at once so
“ sublime, and so simple, should be the work of
“ man? Is it possible, that the Sacred Personage,

* Acts xvii. 18.

" whose history it contains, should be himself a mere
" man? Do we find, that he assumed the air of an
" enthusiast, or ambitious sectary? What sweetness!
" What purity of manners! What an affecting grace-
" fulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his
" maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses!
" What presence of mind! What subtilty! What
" truth in his replies! How great the command
" over his passions! Where is the man, where is
" the philosopher, who could so live and die without
" weakness, and without ostentation? Shall we sup-
" pose the Evangelical History to be a mere fiction?
" Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of
" fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates,
" which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well
" attested as that of Jesus Christ. The Jewish au-
" thors were incapable of the fiction, and strangers
" to the morality, contained in the Gospel; the
" marks of whose truth are so striking and invin-
" cible, that the inventor would be a more astonishing
" character than the hero."*

You affect, indeed, in the page I have last quoted, to speak highly of the personal character of Jesus Christ; yet, strange as it may appear, his apostles and disciples, who trod in his steps, and followed his example, inculcated the same morality, and preached the same doctrine, have the honourable misfortune

* Rousseau, vol. v., p. 215—218.

of meriting your censure, and your scorn. “*Jesus Christ*,” you say, “*appears to be a virtuous and an amiable character* ;” but, how you will be able to reconcile this, with his own assertion, “*I and my Father are one*,” it will be somewhat difficult to discover. For, if the sentiment, contained in this assertion, be true, all your attempts, to invalidate the evidence of the New Testament, are founded in falsehood; and, if this assertion be false, you must impeach his morality, by allowing a man to be virtuous, who could aspire to an equality with God; and, in either case, you evidently convict yourself.

It will be in vain to reply, that this is hearsay evidence. If Bible evidence be hearsay, I would ask, From what source did you derive your information, respecting Christ and his Apostles? You quote, without hesitation, from the Bible, whatever you conceive will militate against the characters of those whom you condemn, and invalidate the authenticity of the Book itself; you cannot, therefore, in common justice, refuse an appeal to the same authority, even when an opposite purpose is to be served. And, when this is granted, unless I am much deceived, the head of prejudice will be more conspicuous than the tail of the Heathen mythology.

In page 7, you seem displeased with the account given of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus

Christ, because it wants publicity. Your words are,
“*The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to
have taken place, admitted of public and ocular de-
monstration, like that of a balloon, or the sun at noon
day, to all Jerusalem at least: a thing which every
one is required to believe, requires that the proof
and evidence of it shou'd be equal to all, and uni-
versal; instead of this, a small number of persons,
not more than eight or nine, are introduced as
proxies for the whole world, to say they saw it; and
all the rest of the world are called upon to believe
it.*”

To render these things universally visible, is not, in the nature of things, possible; as no kind of figure whatever, could be rendered visible, at once, to all the millions of beings which were scattered over the surface of an opaque and spherical body like the earth which we inhabit. Besides, in some parts of the world it must have been total night. In addition to all this, to satisfy your incredulity, he must have arisen from every place, and at all times, and in every age; the absurdity and impossibility of which, need only be mentioned to be despised. If this idea be too gross to be admitted, let us turn our thoughts to the subject in another form.

As all could not be admitted as evidences to this transaction, what part shall be dismissed? It must

be all the past, all the future, and nine tenths of the world besides; and all those who were thus excluded, must necessarily depend on those who saw it, for every information they obtained on the subject. Here, then, you must admit that very principle, for which you condemn Revelation.

The principle being admitted, What number shall be fixed on, as proxies for the whole world? That an overwhelming majority must be excluded, cannot be denied; and, under these circumstances, I can discover no necessity, that would require the relater of the event to bring more evidence of the truth of his allegation, than that which the New Testament affords. It appears, therefore, that those who witnessed the fact, are sufficiently strong, in point of reason, to obtain the credit of the whole world; for, if ten men of unimpeached reputations are insufficient to establish a fact, no number can be free from the same objection: the objection which will apply to ten men, will be proportionably forcible against ten thousand. If you can demonstrate any number to be more proper for the purpose, than what is recorded, you will oblige the Christian world by your discovery.

As it is impossible for any thing to be and not to be, at the same time, so it is impossible for the resurrection to take place in the present age, for this plain reason,

because it is already past; and, therefore, its proof cannot be equal to all, and universal. Thus are you under the necessity of renouncing that universal publicity, for which you contend, and of reducing it to a number of proxies, which you affect to despise: so that, view this subject in what light you please, it upbraids you with its own absurdity.

Page 8. "*But it appears, Thomas did not believe the resurrection, or as they say, would not believe it, without having ocular or manual demonstration himself; neither will I: and the reason is as good for me, and every one else, as for Thomas.*" I answer, if so, Christ would have nothing else to do, but to travel from country to country, to satisfy individual incredulity. This is demanding a proof which is impossible; for, if there be about nine hundred millions of inhabitants on the surface of the earth at once, and the average age of all be at thirty years, which must be far above the mark, he must have given "ocular and manual demonstration" to nearly four hundred persons every minute, without allowing any interval of time, to move from place to place; which, in the nature of things, is impossible; and, if so, all cannot have that ocular and sensible proof, which you so unreasonably demand.

Secondly, if all the inhabitants, who were alive when that event took place, had a right to make that

demand, the age which succeeded it had the same right; and the next in succession had the same; and the demand will hold equally good, through the whole progress of time. From hence it will follow, that all have not a right to make the same demand that Thomas did; for he had an opportunity of satisfying his incredulity, which we have not; and the sensible evidence, which was possible to him, is impossible to you and me. Thirdly, setting aside the impossibility arising from the nature of things, a compliance with your demand would annihilate the system of Christian Revelation; for the death of Christ is as necessary as his life; and his resurrection as necessary as his death; and his ascension as necessary as either: and, if so, to demand individual, ocular, manual demonstration of the truth of the resurrection of Christ, is to destroy the existence of that system, which you design thus to demonstrate. For, admitting that he should descend to give sensitive proof to all, he must be detained upon earth as long as human life exists; and, therefore, could not ascend into heaven. But, waving all these things, the amount of your argument is this. Men, as rational beings, ought not to become Christians until they have obtained a proof which is absolutely impossible as well as unreasonable; and ought not to give credit to the Christian system, until it be destroyed. If this be the rationality of Deism, it wants a better recommendation.

What follows, is but mere matter of opinion; yet even this is erroneous; for you must either renounce your opinion, or incorporate lies with the morality of Christ. You say, “*It is not improbable,* “*but Jesus Christ had in view the delivery of the Jewish nation from the Roman bondage;*” but Jesus Christ says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” Which of these two assertions shall we believe? You cannot both be entitled to credit. His, however, is an actual declaration, in the negative; yours, mere presumption, to the contrary: and that your opinion is wrong, appears from this single reflection. The Jews must certainly have known better in that day, than you can in this, whether Christ had any such object in view; but they say not one word about it. His preaching was levelled at their hypocrisy and vice. Hence, he compares them to whitened walls, or to painted sepulchres, which appear fair to view, but within are full of rottenness, and dead men’s bones; and they, not being able to withstand the force of his reproofs, conspired against him. They charged him with crimes which they could not prove; and, through the interest of their prejudices, he was apprehended, condemned, and crucified. The descendants of these men, who stand as living monuments of the truth of Scripture, retain, to this day, the prejudices of their forefathers, and their general language is, “Crucify him, crucify him.” This easily accounts for the backwardness of modern

Jews, to vindicate the character or doctrine of Christ. How you came by that monstrous idea,—“*It is not improbable, but Christ had in view the delivery of the Jewish nation, from the Roman bondage; but that, between contending factions, this virtuous revolutionist lost his life,*”—I know not. It seems to be a creature of your own fancy: for, if the Jews had entertained such an opinion, they would rather have ventured their lives in his behalf, than have made such strenuous exertions to procure his execution.

In page 9, you bring into the field a dreadful train of philosophical artillery, which you thus discharge over the system of Revelation. After observing, that “*the fable of Jupiter and the giants suggested the idea of the Christian Revelation,*” you say, that “*the story of the giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan. The Christian mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again, in order to bring on the sequel of their fable: he is then introduced into the garden of Eden, in the shape of a snake, or serpent; and, in that shape, he enters into a familiar conversation with Eve, who is no ways surprised to hear a snake talk: and the issue of this tête-a-tête is, that he persuades her to eat an apple; and the eating of that apple damns all mankind.*” I am inclined to think,

first, that you will not find it so easy, to prove the superior antiquity of the Heathen mythology. I may defy you, or any other person, to produce a character more remote than the deluge; to which period Christianity appeals: although, from the best accounts extant, it is not difficult to prove, that most of the original names in the Heathen mythology, are derived from Noah and his descendants, from a misunderstanding or misapplication of their characters. But the story of Satan, the serpent, and Eve, are of a much more ancient date.

Secondly, you have started, in the above quotation, a question, for which, on the principles of Deism, you cannot account; namely, *the introduction of moral evil into the world*. There is not, I believe, any historical account extant, but carries with it some external or internal evidence of the degeneracy of the human race. The Bible gives a brief narration of facts, from the creation; and it opens, almost, with the introduction of moral evil. It is an easier task, for you to give to the Bible an air of fable, than to controvert those facts, which are contained in the present consideration. I will not, however, appeal, like yourself, to a book which you disbelieve, for a proof of facts, of which you deny the existence; nor to traditional mythology; but to reason and realities.

The truth or falsehood of the Bible is, then, at present, out of the question. Facts and reason you cannot deny; especially *reason*, which you seem to deify more than Christians do Satan. I am inclined to think, that, as an individual, you believe we were created by God; and, this being admitted, you cannot deny, that the Power which created all things, whatever it be, must be the general Parent of the universe. Various have been, and still are, the opinions among men, respecting the origin of things. Atheists ascribe it to chance; Fatalists, to necessity; and Deists, to a God, whom they variously define. Some conceive him to be a mere philosophical abstraction; others view him as the soul of the world; and others survey him as a solitary being, who, having created the universe, has abandoned it to the dominion of fate, or the caprice of chance. The Bible asserts God to be a moral governor of the universe, and the superintendent of human affairs. It appears, to me, that you are of that number, who consider God as delivering up all to second causes, and never concerning himself about mundane affairs.

As the supposition, that action may be prior to existence, involves a palpable contradiction, it is certain, that nothing could create itself; and, therefore, not man. All things however, must either

be created, or eternal. That the individuals of the human race are not eternal, we have evidence, from daily mortality; and, as not one of the parts is eternal, so neither can the whole, which is formed of these parts. Man, therefore, is not eternal.

The only essences which we know to exist, are those of matter and spirit; to these, therefore, we must turn our thoughts, for the origin of things. As to chance and fate, they are but the creatures of imagination; and, consequently, they could not have created the world.

The question now renews itself, How came this universe to exist? It must be either created or eternal; for it has been already proved, that nothing could create itself. That it is not eternal, is evident, from the following considerations.

Motion cannot be eternal, because it depends on matter for its existence: nor could matter primarily beget motion; for then motion must have existed prior to primary motion, which involves a contradiction. If we deny the existence of an intelligent being, and admit matter to be eternal, we involve ourselves in new difficulties about the origin of motion. That local motion is not inseparable from matter, we have the most sensible proofs; daily observation demon-

strating, that matter does exist without it; motion must be, therefore, either a mode or an accident of matter, or a superadded quality; but, in admitting it to be either of these, we destroy its eternity. If motion be not eternal, how came it to exist? Was it produced by matter, or by itself? It could not be produced by matter; for this implies motion prior to motion: nor could it be produced by itself; for this would be to suppose in motion, an action prior to its own existence. If, then, matter has received motion from some power distinct from, and independent of itself,---which it necessarily must,---matter itself must be dependant; and, consequently, it is not eternal; and that Power, on which it depends, must be God. As matter could not, any more than motion, create itself, or be eternal, for reasons already assigned, it must be created; and that, which created it, must be God. The God who created it, must, also, be something more than a philosophical abstraction; and, if more, he must possess intelligence; and include, in his nature, those perfections which we call his attributes.

What these attributes are,—where they extend,—or how they operate, we know only in part; nevertheless, we know enough to attain to some knowledge of the Divine nature. In the human mind, we discern his intelligence; in the supply of all our wants,

we behold his goodness; in contemplating the structure of the universe, we discover his wisdom in arranging, as well as his power in creating and sustaining; and, in contemplating the order, harmony, and disposal of all above, and all below, we behold his justice. But what justice is, in all the relations it bears to God, we cannot fully comprehend; nor is it possible, that any faculty of the human mind, can grasp an attribute of the Infinite God, any more than a part can comprehend or contain a whole, of which itself is but a part. In fine, what we conceive of God, is an assemblage of all possible perfections, abstracted from all possible moral evil. It is to this God we now turn our thoughts, and ask, Of what nature and essential properties did he create man?

It is certain, that the beings whom he created, must have partaken of his perfections, so far as their natures, in their respective spheres, were capable of partaking them. On the human mind, he must necessarily have stamped in miniature, his wisdom, justice, goodness, rectitude, and love; nor could there be, in the nature of man, any degree of moral evil.

The importance of the question now arises, How came man possessed of moral evil? To say, that God created him morally evil, is to charge God with the turpitude of every bad action, and to destroy

those attributes, which are essential to his nature and existence. But, as moral evil cannot be attributed to God, it must have been derived from some other source. As the existence of the fact cannot be denied, the only question remaining is, What cause brought it into being? If man were created in a state of moral rectitude,---which must be admitted, ---there could exist in him, no propensity to wickedness; and, if no propensity, it must follow, that man must, at least, be equally indifferent to moral good and evil. It would, therefore, follow, if evil and goodness were but accidents of the mind, that we might rationally expect to find as many morally good, as morally bad; but facts will repel this conclusion. Now, as the human mind tends universally to evil, and as there are none untainted, there cannot be a stronger proof, that some evil principle predominates. But how could it be introduced?—how could it begin? Bad example may influence the present generation of men; but it could not influence where it was not, nor act before it had a beginning; and there was a time when bad example was not. As moral evil, therefore, must have been introduced, and have existed prior to bad example, bad example could not be the primary cause of moral evil. How can you fairly account for its introduction? I appeal to your ingenuity,—I appeal to your reason, to give a more rational account than is given in that Book, which you so unphilosophically despise.

In the great chain of being, man, who was to be a distinguished link, was endowed with rationality, which rationality implied a capacity for happiness. This, together with the freedom of the human intellect, arises necessarily from the nature of man, and the attributes of God; and, as happiness was the result of these principles, so happiness depended upon the retention of them. In this state, human nature must have had a law, as a test of obedience,—as a proof of dependance,—and as an incitement to gratitude; otherwise, the sovereign of this world must have been consigned over to lawless anarchy, while all the inferior orders of animated beings would have had their respective laws, pointed out by instincts, implanted in their natures; but, as this would have militated against the order of things, it is not reasonable to admit it. If, on the other hand, man had a law, it must have been prescribed either by himself, or God; but, certainly, God, as creator, had an exclusive right to prescribe the law, and to define its terms. This law was given; and it was easily to be obeyed, because it was plainly to be understood. The greater the injunction, the more severity would have appeared, and the more circumscribed must have been human liberty; but God, on the present occasion, reduced the discharge of moral obligation, to a single point; promising life on obedience, and threatening death on transgression.

But what were the conditions, on which these great events were suspended? They follow:—" Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."* And there can be little reason to doubt, that the command would have been equally forcible, if nothing more than the mere treading upon a tuft of grass, had been interdicted, because criminality depended not on the simple action, but on the violation of that principle which was the test of homage.

I am ready to allow, that, if this account had been given, in the manner you represent it, and we had been told, that man fell from his primitive rectitude, without an adequate cause, you might, with some propriety, have objected to the narration. The sacred writers, however, trace this calamity to a higher source, than that of a mere serpent entering into a conversation with Eve. The serpent was but an instrument, through which an evil spirit exerted its agency, to bring on the melancholy catastrophe, to the truth of which, the depravity of mankind bears an awful testimony. Nor are we assured, that Eve heard the serpent speak, without any surprise. The silence of the historian furnishes no proof that

* Gen. ii. 17.

astonishment was not excited. The concise account which we have in the Bible, of antediluvian events, affords a presumptive evidence against your conclusion, without even granting a fair foundation for the inference you have made. According to this narration, a change of principles succeeded this fatal action, which was followed by a corruption of manners. Human happiness was no longer sought in a union with God; but moral and natural evil, with all their attendant effects and consequences, deformed the works of creative power. Such is the Bible account of the introduction of moral evil, and of human misery.

That this statement, even setting aside all arguments which may be drawn from facts, to prove its certainty, and from authority, to establish its authenticity, is entitled to more respect than that with which you have treated it, few, I presume, will be disposed to deny. And, placing it, exclusively, on the ground of rationality, I feel no hesitation in asserting, that it has a fairer claim to credit, than any which I have ever seen produced by the pen of infidelity. If facts had not established the existence of moral evil, with an evidence not to be resisted, you might, with some probability of success, have treated the account given by Moses, as fabulous; but your rejecting his narration, without assigning any thing, that has the appearance of reason, for so doing, and

without substituting any thing more plausible in its stead, resembles the conduct of a man, who would destroy my habitation, under a pretence that it was not sufficiently elegant for a person of my dignity, and then leave me, without shelter, exposed to the inclement atmosphere.

As this account stands on the rationality of its own evidence, and is supported by such facts as reason must admit, namely, the real existence of moral evil, it is not in the nature of true principles to banish it from the world. Burlesque, assuming the form of reason, may, with the profligate and the ignorant, prove successful, in deception, for a season; but, the instant in which it is detected, it will be dismissed, and the spell will be dissolved.

That the intellectual powers of man, are confined within certain boundaries, is, I conceive, a truth, which we must allow; and, if this be granted, we cannot doubt, that there may be many rational facts, which we must be naturally incapable of comprehending; and this, not merely from a want of actual information, but through the limitation of our faculties. Under these circumstances, it is but reasonable, that we should satisfy ourselves, before we dismiss this memorial as fabulous, whether a more rational account of the introduction of moral evil, than that given by Moses, is within the reach of possibility.

That God is able to communicate, to intelligent agents, an accurate knowledge of the real origin of moral evil, I will not presume to question; but whether the physical origin of any thing be communicable to man, unless his powers were to undergo such changes as would place him among some more exalted order of beings, is what I very much doubt. To comprehend the origin of principles, and the nature of essences, may require intellectual energies, as far advanced above our sphere of knowledge, as man is removed from the brute creation; and this may, perhaps, be included in those systems of philosophy, which are peculiarly adapted for such exalted states of existence; and which, in our present condition, can no more lie within our reach, than the solar system can be rendered intelligible to an elephant or an ape. To make man susceptible of such superior knowledge, would be to raise him in the scale of being, above that station in which God has placed him; and, possessed of these powers, he would be no longer man, but some higher order of intelligent nature, for which, perhaps, we want a name. To these relative considerations you seem to have paid no attention; and, without having any certainty, that a more intelligible account of the introduction of moral evil, than that given by Moses, is within the reach of possibility, you reject it with disdain, and represent, as fabulous, the cause he assigns; because his narration deviates from that

standard, by which you reduce the conduct of Omnipotence to a resemblance with earthly analogies.

It is, however, an indisputable fact, that the moral condition of man is considerably altered from what it originally must have been. The first who committed moral evil, could not have been influenced by bad example; because it did not then exist: although it is evident, that since that period, its fatal influence has had but too much dominion over the human race. Here, then, we have before us, an inequality in the condition of men, for which infidelity cannot account; but the fact itself destroys your observation, by proving, that *the road to God is NOT open to every man alike*. The condition of those who are influenced by bad example, and that of those with whom it did not exist, is specifically different; and hence we may infer, that moral justice, as displayed in the various branches of the Divine economy, is not always to be measured by the standard of finite conception. What we perceive of moral justice, we can only view, in relation to human agency and action, within the hemisphere of probationary observation. But how far the sacred principle extends, and of what varieties in operation it is capable, before it approximates towards injustice, are points not placed within the human powers to determine.

You further say, “*After Satan had triumphed over the creation, they should have sent him back again; but, instead of this, they bribed him to stay, and promised him all the Turks, all the Jews, nine-tenths of the world besides, and Mahomet into the bargain.*” From what source this charge is derived, I am at a loss to determine. The Bible, instead of countenancing your assertion, unequivocally declares, that “in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”* On the finally incorrigible, indeed, it denounces the miseries of a future state; but the righteous and the wicked comprehend its grand divisions of mankind. If, through the influence of bigotry, or an illiberal spirit, individuals or parties may be found, who profess to believe the Bible, and yet sanction, by their conduct, the sarcasm of your observation, I have no objection that it should fall upon them with all its force; but this will not implicate the sacred sources of the Christian religion.

You suggest, that “*after Satan had triumphed over the creation, they,*”—meaning, I presume, “the Christian mythologists,”—“*should have sent him back again.*” To this, I would reply, that, whether the account be founded on truth or fiction, the narrator could not have complied with your advice,

* Acts x, 35.

if he intended to preserve any consistency in his account. If Satan had been sent back again, it must have been either by man or God; for no other agency is introduced. It could not, however, have been by the former; for this would imply that man had acquired new energy from his fall, and had obtained, through the loss of moral rectitude, a power to send Satan back; although, when it was in full vigour, it was insufficient to prevent his introduction. And, if it had been by the latter, God must have interfered with human agency, in such a manner as would have been inconsistent with the moral constitution of creation. The "mythologists," have, therefore, preserved a consistency in their account, which the author of the "Age of Reason," has not had the ingenuity to recommend.

In page 10, you speak of the *enlargement* of Satan, and of his *deification*; and add, "*After his fall he becomes, by their account, omnipresent: he exists every where, at the same time; and occupies the whole immensity of space.*" On these points, the primary subject for our consideration is, whether any thing, like this, is asserted in the Bible. This I hesitate not to deny. On the contrary, we find a plurality of dæmons asserted, such as, "My name is legion; for we are many."^{*} And until you can

* Mark v. 9.

ascertain with what velocity an evil spirit can transport itself from one place to another, and determine the extent of its influence, you can never decide upon the number of daemons necessary to preserve moral evil in its present state of existence. Of this we are certain, that it extends its dominion over the moral world; and it is certainly a possible case, that, the primitive fountain being once polluted, in the manner the Scriptures inform us, the streams may have acquired a germ of evil, which may perpetuate its own continuance, and thus produce the varied but fatal effects which we discover. I do not contend that this is the fact. I only argue for its possibility; and when even this is admitted, the *necessity* of Satan's omnipresence wholly disappears.

Nor can I conceive, how the sacred historians, whether we survey their observations separately or collectively, suggest any ideas, that "the enlargement of Satan was greater after his fall, than it was before." The supposition is evidently founded on an erroneous conception of the subject. We know nothing of the dominion of Satan, prior to his fall, so as to enable us to measure its extent. On this point, the language of Scripture is bold and figurative; but, in every sentence, the ideas which are conveyed, unite together to refute your assertion. The apostrophe of Isaiah,—"How art thou fallen

from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"*—suggests conceptions of vast power, and extensive, though undefined dominion; and, in the Revelation, the same ideas are again renewed. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out; that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."† Such are the accounts of this event, which we gather from the Bible; but I have no more conception, that we can infer from hence, that "the enlargement of Satan was greater after his fall than it was before," than that the authors of the Bible represent Satan as "occupying the the whole immensity of space." Between the entire dominion of this world, and the most limited power in heaven, we have no means of measuring the proportion; nor am I aware, that, in any of their writings, the sacred authors have made the attempt.

Adverting to the influence, which the authors of the Bible ascribe to Satan, to his dominion in the moral world, and to the means which God has

* Isaiah xiv. 12.

† Rev. xii. 7—9.

instituted for the recovery of man, through the medium of redemption, you more than intimate, that the order of things is inverted, and that “ they make the transgressors triumph, and the Almighty fall.” You must be well aware, sir, that Christianity connects this world with that which shall succeed it; and the whole system is founded upon this fundamental principle, that time can never be ultimately separated from eternity. To form a proper estimate of this, you should have recollectcd, what the Bible has informed us, respecting a future state of existence ; and, if this had been the case, I am inclined to think, you would have found but little occasion to say, that “ they make the transgressors triumph, and the Almighty fall.”

The “ exhibition of Satan on a cross,” admitting it to have been possible, might have inflicted punishment on him as an offender; but how this could have made a restitution for his crime, in the seduction of man, or have eradicated the malignant effects of moral evil from the human soul, by no means appears. That Satan is doomed to suffer for his offences, the “ fable ” uniformly asserts; but this can never renovate human nature, and prepare it for eternal glory. In our present state, we can have no adequate comprehension of the whole economy of God: the concluding scenes lie beyond the grave;

where justice and mercy will be fully unfolded, in harmony with each other; and the attributes of Deity will shine, with a degree of lustre, which infidelity shall be unable to tarnish or impeach.

In page 11, you inform us, with much affected liberality, that "*credulity is not a crime.*" Now, admitting your observation to be founded on fact, you cannot but allow, even on your own principles, that there is nothing criminal in believing the Bible to be the word of God; and it also follows, from your own concessions, that our adoption of the principles of infidelity is not essential to our future happiness. I am far, however, from granting, that it is a matter of indifference, whether we believe truth or error; for, if faith in a Saviour be necessary to salvation, then those who reject it must have embraced a theory, which will be attended with the most awful consequences. That this is your situation, and that you view the sacrifice of Christ with abhorrence and contempt, we cannot but perceive, from the following passage: "*Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subject, than tragedy or suicide? or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it, but the sacrifice of the Creator?*" You must be sensible, that this passage contains no argument; and, therefore, it may be repelled in a strain similar to that in which it is

delivered. Is, then, I would ask, the arrogance and presumption of man become so intolerable, that even the conduct of Omnipotence shall be arraigned for every action, that will not furnish him with all the evidence that pride requires? Shall man despise overtures of mercy, even while conscious of his guilt, because he happens to dislike the principles upon which they are presented to him, and the medium through which they are communicated? Or, finally, shall the benevolence of God be defeated of its purposes, because man is too ungrateful to acknowledge his obligations, and too blind to perceive the benefits, which heaven, out of compassion, confers?—The dictates of conscience will give to these questions an unsophisticated answer.

But, for the evils of which you complain, you have provided a singular remedy. Many, however, will think it too desperate, to be adopted without hesitation. To give stability to “staggering incredulity,” you advise us to cut off, at one stroke, all that has been held venerable and sacred for ages; but, unfortunately, you have nothing to offer in its stead, but a liberation from every restraint on those unhallowed passions of our nature, which would furnish a passport to every vice. To remove doubts, you teach us to disbelieve; to promote the interests of moral virtue, you recommend the abolition of every moral principle; and to awaken us

from the delirium of superstition, you administer an opiate, which, while it cherishes the moral depravity of the heart, strangles, in the birth, every pang of conscientious remorse.

In the same page, you pass on to an examination of "the books, called the Old and New Testament;" but, pausing on the margin of your inquiry, you ask, "*Who told us they were the word of God?*" to which you answer, "*Nobody can tell;*" and hence you conclude, that "*they must be false.*" That this is a legitimate inference, very few, I presume, will have the hardihood to assert. If I were to ask, Who told us, that the History of Josephus, the Epistles of Pliny, the Orations of Cicero, and the Elements of Euclid, were all written by the authors whose names they bear? and should be answered, "*Nobody can tell,*" would this falsify the testimony of facts, which these books respectively contained? No one, I think, would presume to make such an assertion, unless the scepticism of his mind coincided with the looseness of morals which your principles unhappily inculcate.

In page 12, you say, "*These writings were collected; but it is uncertain whether they have been altered, abridged, or dressed up.*" It is obvious, from hence, that you admit the prior existence of the sacred writings, otherwise they could not have

been collected; and this destroys an insinuation which you elsewhere make, that "*they suit the gloomy genius of a monk, by whom, it is not improbable, they were written.*" I think, you cannot deny, that those, by whom they were collected and examined, thought them of a different origin, otherwise they would never have found their way into the world in their present state; and, I conceive, that their means of knowing could not have been much inferior to your own.

But "*it is uncertain, whether they have been altered, abridged, or dressed up.*" Now, admitting this, it follows, on your own principles, that we have no evidence whatever, of their being either altered, abridged, or dressed up; and, consequently, your charge is destitute of any real foundation. And, as every principle of moral justice supposes innocence till guilt is proved, it follows, from your own language, that the uncertainty of evidence against their authenticity, tends to establish that reputation, which it failed in attempting to overthrow.

Another charge is, that "*it was decided by vote, which of these books should be the word of God, by some who called themselves by the general name of the church; and this is all we know of the matter.*" From the face of this quotation, it appears, that you do not accuse those who examined

these books, of voting wrong; and it is not improbable, that they were called to this task by the infidels of that day, who had their HOURS, if not their AGE, of *Reason*. To decide on this question, with impartiality, before the world, they examined the evidence on which the authenticity of these books rested; and, according to your own statement, the result was, that they thought it sufficiently strong in favour of the canonical books, to secure their united suffrage and approbation. Had you been aware of these consequences, I am inclined to think, you would not have given such undesigned supports to Christianity; nor would you, after having thus informed us, that those who examined the evidence decided in favour of the Bible, have left us under the impression, that "*this is all we know of the matter.*"

Having dismissed the external evidence, you next appeal to that which is internal; but before you call your witnesses, permit me to repeat my question, and ask, On what principle of equity or justice, can you quote the sacred books for self-accusation, while you forbid them to make any defence? If the testimonies, which may be adduced in their favour, must be rejected, because they only amount to hearsay evidence, on the same common principle, every apparent inconsistency, which you can discover, must, of necessity, lose all its force.

As you seem to despise the method of “establishing the word of God by vote,” I would ask,—How is it possible, that we, any more than our predecessors, can otherwise embody the result of our judgments? What is every man’s vote, but his judgment expressed? The men, whom you condemn, only acted upon the principle which you have adopted. You examine the books, and, from the fancied internal evidence which you discover, you reject them as fabulous; thus deciding against the Bible, by your vote. But, surely, if the sacred books cannot be *established* by this mode of procedure, neither can they be *condemned*, on the same principle. It, therefore, appears, that the men, who voted in favour of their authenticity, only did what you, without any consistency, at once repeat and condemn. They examined, and voted in their favour; you profess to examine, and you vote against them; and consequently, they are entitled to equal credit with yourself.

Suppose if I, from reading the “Age of Reason,” should suspect the authenticity of the Bible; and, in order to examine its external and internal evidence, I should call to my assistance a number of friends, in whose judgment I could place confidence. If the evidence should result in favour of the doubtful points, would it follow, that the Bible must be false; because fifty or a hundred men, of piety and learning,

thought it true? I should rather conceive, that this would afford, at least, a presumptive evidence in its favour; especially, if we lived in an age, when every means of obtaining the most authentic information of its truth or falsehood, was in our power. Unanimous vote is nothing more than the expression of unanimous opinion; and, on books, of which you admit the previous existence, I am at a loss to know, how collective judgment could be taken in any other way.

You say, in the same page, "*Revelation can-not be applied to any thing done upon earth, of which man is either the actor or the witness; consequently, all the historical and anecdotal parts of the Bible, which are almost the whole of it, are not within the compass of the word Revelation; and, therefore, are not the word of God.*" Had you submitted this to the vote, I am inclined to think, that it would never have been published to the world; because it is a decision, which is not only without proof, but is refuted by the united testimony of facts, and is contradicted by your own assertion, where you tell us, that "*Revelation is a communication of any thing, to any person, of what he did not know before.*"

It has been the fate of many, to be deluded by the appearance of popular reasonings, without once

suspecting the error which lay at the foundation of the seductive art; and without considering the inconsistencies they indiscreetly admitted. I grant, that nothing can be a revelation to that person, who is the actor of the thing said to be revealed; but though it cannot be a revelation to that identical person, yet it may be a revelation to all the world besides. Whatever was said by Jesus Christ, to those who wrote the account, was a revelation to them; because, on your own principles, "Revelation is a communication of any thing, to any person, of what he did not know before;" and, consequently, as many new principles of moral action, as well as new doctrines, of which they were previously ignorant, were imparted by him, these, to them, were a revelation.

Revelation may be visual as well as mental. A real miracle, performed in the sight of spectators, would be, to them, a revelation; because it would be the communication of something which they knew not before; but, being transmitted through the organs of vision, it would be a visual revelation.

Does not the material universe display the wisdom and power of God? Yet the planetary worlds, conveying to our senses and understandings, what we knew not before, fall within your definition of a revelation. Although man is the witness of these

stupendous realities, does this, or any such evidence, destroy the identity of any revelation? Certainly not; because it is the very medium through which we are assured of its certainty. But a direct communication of any thing to the understanding, which we knew not before, is an intellectual revelation; and, consequently, whatever the Bible has thus conveyed, must of necessity be, to us, a revelation: and, were I to conclude like yourself, I might add,—*and, consequently, is the word of God;* but I will only say,—*and, therefore, your premises are false.*

Let us suppose the case of a man who was born blind. He can have nothing but oral testimony of such things as are visible to others. Does it therefore follow, that, to him, the luminaries of heaven do not exist, and, consequently, demonstrate nothing of the power and wisdom of God? No: the demonstration still exists, by an intellectual communication from others; and this, to him, is a revelation. What is history, but a revelation of facts, though man is the recorder, the witness, the auditor, and oftentimes the cause? View your premises however I may, they are demonstrably false; and, consequently, what you draw from them must fall to the ground.

You finish your observations, in page 13, by saying, “*We ought to feel shame at calling such paltry*

"*stories the word of God.*" You affect to speak this out of veneration to the Almighty, who governs the immense whole; but I presume you are more of a philosopher, than to conceive, that any thing becomes either "paltry" or contemptible, when applied to him. Height, depth, breadth, length, greatness, meanness, grandeur, and poverty, with a variety of such relative terms and ideas, are all local, and confined to created things; and, consequently, they are not applicable to God. Now, if these terms and ideas are thus rendered totally inapplicable, the paltriness or meanness, of any story, can never furnish an objection against its divine origin.

What would you, as a philosopher, say, were you to hear a man making such assertions as the following:—"When we contemplate the extent of "creation, and the infinite power and wisdom of "Him, who conducts the amazing whole, we ought "to feel shame, at calling such paltry actions, as the "creation of *spiders, toads, and serpents*, the work "of God"? Would you not despise such objections, and treat them with the contempt they deserved? These observations will apply to your own case. Is meanness or paltriness applicable to God? Why not riches or poverty, strength or weakness, age or youth? Whatever is infinite can admit of no degree of comparison; but paltriness is a degree of comparison, and is, therefore, inapplicable to God:

consequently, all you infer, from hence, falls with the foundation.

You further tell us, that "*the whole account is "traditional.*" The truth of this assertion, will depend, in no small degree, upon the definition of the term. But, if what you assert, were granted, I cannot perceive, how this would falsify the account. If the supposed facts, contained in the Bible, be traditional, and are, therefore, false, there is no historical account in existence, that will not be implicated in the common charge; and, if this be admitted, all moral and historical certainty, must, at one stroke, be banished from the world.

In the same page you say, "*Whenever we read "the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the "cruel and torturous executions, with which more "than half the Bible is filled, it would be more "consistent, that we called it the word of a dæmon, "than the word of God: it is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize "mankind; and, for my part, I sincerely detest it, "as I detest every thing that is cruel.*" As you give no example, of the above description, I may justly doubt the truth of your allegation; however, I will venture to assert, that every story of obscenity and wickedness, recorded in the Bible, is exhibited there, not to induce imitation, but abhorrence.

I believe, the maddest enthusiast that ever lived, never thought of calling every word in the Bible, the word of God. Many parts of the sacred writings record the speeches and actions of wicked men and dæmons; and they are handed down to us, to excite our disapprobation, and to instruct us to take warning by the awful examples they present. Acts of debauchery and obscenity are objects of Bible detestation, as well as yours; and what you call "*torturous executions*" are frequently inflicted, as punishments for those deeds of criminality, with which you most unjustly reproach the Bible.

Whoever is acquainted with the contents of the Bible, must allow, that a prohibition of murder, theft, adultery, idolatry, and every species of wickedness, and an inculcation of benevolence, resignation, and every moral virtue, are enrolled among its permanent principles; and no man can suppose, that these prohibitions and injunctions, are calculated "to corrupt and brutalize mankind." Instances of deviation from them, I readily allow, may be found, in many parts; but you must be well aware, that the causes of these deviations are frequently assigned. In numerous cases, the record of the act is accompanied with a development of character, which the writers introduce to condemn. On some occasions, man appears before us, as a mere instrument in the hand of God, to execute the decisions of his justice

upon the guilty; and on others, the simple fact is mentioned, while the reasons for it, together with its causes and consequences, are concealed from human observation. Now if, under any of these, or similar circumstances, an ambiguous expression, or inexplicable fact, should appear before us, is it consonant with reason, or with common justice, to give to either an interpretation, in direct opposition to those fundamental principles which characterize the sacred volume? To this question, I think, there can be but one reply; and I should conceive, that the “Age of Reason” ought to bear another name, if its principles would lead its readers to decide in your favour.

In the natural, and in the moral world, we frequently perceive effects without their causes, and causes separated from their effects and consequences; and if, on numerous occasions, our judgments were to be formed, on the mere insulated fact which appears, we should, according to your mode of reasoning, be led to conclude, that the natural world was governed by chance; and that, in the moral department, justice and compassion had been excluded from the economy of heaven. Shall we infer, that God has withdrawn his dominion from the works of nature, because Port Royal and Lisbon were ingulphed by earthquakes;—because Lima was destroyed by a similar deviation from the common

course of things;—because Herculaneum and Pompeii were overwhelmed with a fiery inundation;—or because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were swallowed by the yawning earth? Shall we conclude, that God has abandoned the moral government of the world, because the wicked triumph in prosperity, and virtue languishes in distress? That man would be more deserving our pity, than our envy or imitation, who would draw a conclusion so absurd. Allow to Revelation the same exceptions, which the economy of God, in the natural and moral world, requires, and it demands no other vindication.

Adverting to the term prophecy, you seem solicitous to give it a meaning, that shall not include a prediction of future events. In page 14, you inform us, that "*the word prophecy meant, the art of making poetry.*" Without inquiring whether this be true or false, I perceive nothing, that can be inferred from hence, in your favour, even though we allow all for which you contend. Is the Bible false, because the word *prophecy* meant *poetry*? What, though the Bible furnishes no word for a poet, an astronomer, or a thousand characters in life, will this furnish any evidence, that it is a compound of fraud and falsehood? It is not in the nature of a common absurdity, to rival a supposition so replete with extravagance.

It is somewhat curious to observe, that, after defining the word *prophet* to mean *poet*, you should retain an explanation which you will not allow, and set aside that for which you contend; and then argue against the consequences of the former, as though you were conscious, that your own definition was erroneous. If those, whom we denominate prophets, have professedly delivered predictions, why do you argue that they are only poets? and if they are only poets, on what ground can you pretend to invalidate their predictions? You seem to have assumed it as a fact, that, if they are poets, they cannot be prophets, without once suspecting, that the two characters are perfectly compatible with each other.

That Isaiah wrote his predictions in the style and manner of poetry, is admitted; but it is incumbent on you to prove, that he has obtained the name of prophet, from his poetry, rather than from his predictions. When, or in what age of the world, did the corruption of the name take place? That the Jews always did, and still do, denominate him from his predictions, is an unquestionable fact; and, from his predictions, they form their expectation of a coming Messiah: and, in this case, it must be admitted, that they are the best living witnesses now extant. That he was a poet, I do not deny; but it rests on you to prove, that he was nothing else.

You say, that "*Deborah and Barak were called prophets, because they composed a poem which bears their name.*" Can you prove this? It is more probable, they were so denominated from their predictions; though these predictions were of a local nature, and do not now exist; being accomplished, perhaps, before they composed that poem, which bears their names. "*David was ranked among the prophets, because he was a musician.*" Is this a proof that he predicted nothing? However, if you can prove that he was a poet, I can prove that he was a prophet; and, to verify my assertion, I refer to the twenty-second psalm: and, between us both, we shall prove, that the two characters are not incompatible with one another. Suppose the name of Alexander Pope, should be handed down to posterity, when nothing but his letters were extant; would the referring to his letters prove, that he was no poet, but only a letter-writer? But, if some of his poetical works were handed down with his letters, would not this prove, that he was both a letter-writer and a poet? I think this would be satisfactory evidence, to any impartial judge, that he derived his character of poet from his poetry, and not from his letters.

In page 16, you say, "*They tell us of the greater and lesser prophets: they might as well tell us about the greater and lesser God.*" To this I answer, Though there can be no degrees, in the quality of

prediction, yet there may be, in the quantity of what the prophets predicted; and, agreeably to this, we find them denominated, from the number of their predictions, and the magnitude of the works they have left behind. Is not Voltaire a greater historian than Thomas Paine? One wrote the Age of Louis XIV, and the other the Age of Reason. Voltaire wrote the Life of Charles XII, of Sweden; Paine, the Destruction of the Bastile. The comparison arose not from the truth or falsehood of what either asserted, but from their works being more or less voluminous. Besides, these terms are not to be found in the Bible, but are added for the sake of perspicuity. Notwithstanding this, you add, in the same page, "*The axe goes to the root at once: the meaning of the word has been mistaken; and, consequently, all the inferences, which have been drawn from thence, are not worth differing about.*" If poetry were forbidden to tell the truth, then your "axe" would go, indeed, "to the root at once;" but the absurdity of your conclusion, needs only to be seen, to be despised. In plain terms, it amounts to this:—*Certain men are said to have written certain things, said to be predictions; but these men were poets; therefore, what they wrote must be false: —the axe goes to the root at once.* Can you find any thing so absurd in all the Bible? No man, I think, can doubt, that the characters are perfectly compatible with one another: there is nothing that

binders. Therefore, "the axe goes to the root at once;" and your premises and conclusion are both proved to be false.

You then assert that, "*the word of God cannot exist in any human or written language.*" How does this agree with what you say in page 5, namely, "*No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty, to make such a communication if he please?*" Which of these two expressions are we to believe? I cannot credit both. I shall, therefore, adhere to what you have said in page 5, and pass the other by.

You finish your remarks upon the Old Testament, with utterly disclaiming the Bible as a rule of faith, "*if it were to excel, in purity of ideas and expression, all the books now extant in the world.*" This is, surely, paying a great compliment to your own abilities; while it discovers an obstinacy of disposition, which bids defiance to conviction; even if brought rationally to your view.

With a mind thus influenced by prejudice, you begin your attack on the New Testament; not like an impartial inquirer after truth, but with a disposition as easily conceived as mentioned. You seem to prowl through the sacred writings, under the direction of that mental ferocity, which the gospel you despise was designed to expel; and, tearing from

their connexion, the passages which fall under your observations, and misrepresenting the principles on which you animadvert, you triumph in the dexterity of your own exploits, and upbraid the sacred authors with the distortions of your own ingenuity. Even the apparent advantages, which they seem to afford you, furnish no contemptible evidence, in favour of their authenticity. A design to impose upon mankind, would have taught their authors to shut those avenues, through which you have entered; and have obliged you to look deeper than the surface, to discover the fraud.

The Bible, like many of the works of nature, appears to the greatest disadvantage to the most superficial beholder. But, when we exclude such secular principles as are apt to bewilder and deceive;—when we examine its essential doctrines,—the proportion of all its parts,—the pleasing harmony arising from the whole,—and the general benefit resulting therefrom; there is such a coincidence with human reason, abstracted from all its grossness, that nothing can justify even you, from withholding your admiration and assent, but your ignorance of those doctrines, which are, at present, the objects of your contempt and scorn. So benign are its precepts, so disinterested its offers, and so extensive its benefits, that, even in the arcana of Deism, there is not a virtue or moral duty, which Christianity does

not recommend and enforce. Instead of discarding reason, as you insinuate, it encourages its operations; and it appeals to reason, as the arbiter of its fate. It is by reason that we discover, where reason is incompetent to the task assigned; and it is by reason that we understand, when it must be suspended, and when called into action.

"*They tell us,*" you say, "*of the New Testament; as if there could be two wills of the Creator.*" Christianity, sir, no where asserts any such thing; and all that can, or ought to be understood by the expression, is, that it is a new manifestation of that will which was known hundreds of years before. This no more charges God with mutability, than the alternate succession of day and night. What absolute immutability is, as it respects God, we know not. Mutability, undoubtedly, implies imperfection; and, therefore, in that sense, God cannot change. Nevertheless, if every minute alteration in the Divine economy, charges him with mutability, we must, necessarily, omit attributing to God any kind of action; and, then, he cannot be the Creator. But, if God be the Creator, there must have been a period when he did not create; and the transition, from a pure negation of things to a positive creation, would, with us, charge any finite being with mutability, and, consequently, with imperfection. But, as neither mutability nor imperfection can be charged

upon God, it must follow, that such transitions as are inseparable from his actions, are not the denominators of mutability. I am inclined to think, that a succession of action, is perfectly compatible with immutability, in God. We behold much of this, among the things with which we are acquainted; and, if these apparent contradictions are reconcileable by our limited capacities, how much more so must they be, to the Creator of these capacities.

Unless you contend, that every thing is eternal, you must admit, that there was a period when things were not, and when God willed not their existence; but the human race exists; therefore God willed it. The immutability of his nature, may be in the promotion---as it respects us---of human happiness, consistent with intellectual freedom. Now, admitting this to be the case, it follows, that God has a right to elect his own means, for the accomplishment of that end; and, provided that end be kept in view, every action, which tends to that point, however various these actions may appear, cannot affect the permanent principles of his immutability. It must be admitted, that God is unchangeably just, perfect, and good; but it does not follow from hence, that God must be invariably attached to the same identical place, person, means, or thing. No: it follows, that God must, invariably, be a lover of justice, perfection, and goodness, wherever these principles are

found. Besides, whatever immutability we may ascribe to God, we know, by uniform experience, that it does not attach itself to us. Is the sun changeable, because we do not always perceive it shining? or, does it cease to shine, because clouds intercept its rays? If God were to change, as we do, the effect would be, an annihilation of all his attributes. It is on the idea suggested above, that we can rationally account for the apparent mutability of God, in the natural and moral world. Variety in his works, implies variety in his actions. But, since immutability of nature must be predicated of him, and this variety in his works cannot be denied, it follows, that diversity of action must be perfectly consistent with absolute immutability of nature, although the manner may surpass our comprehension.

That the same principles are preserved in the New Testament, which were displayed in the Old, is discoverable, from the frequent appeals which are made thereto, by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and the only difference between them is, that the Old Testament envelopes in shades, what the New Testament reveals without them. But, it seems to be, invariably, the object of the Bible, to promote the happiness of the human race, consistent with human freedom; and to make that happiness depend upon a union with God, and works of righteousness.

You say, page 17, "*Had it been the object or intention of Jesus Christ, to establish a new religion, he would, undoubtedly, have written, or procured it to be written, by others, during his life.*" Was the thing possible? Do not you know, that a great part of the Christian system, depended upon his death? How then could he write it, unless he were to rise from the dead, for that purpose? His resurrection you deny; and his death being one of the principles on which the system is founded, it became necessary, to the existence of that system. He could not, therefore, have written, during his life, an account of that system and those transactions, which were not complete till after his crucifixion.

In the same page you say, "*Moses was a foundling, Mahomet was a mule-driver, and Jesus Christ was born in a stable.*" This contains no argument. The meanness of his birth, furnishes no proof against the divinity of his person or mission; and I conceive, that this comparison can only be made, to counteract that virtuous and philanthropic character, which you had given him before.

In page 18, you tell us, "*He did not intend to be apprehended; and, consequently, did not intend to be crucified.*" Whatever you may think of the subject, it is a fact, resting on the same evidence

on which you found this charge of pusillanimity, that he said, "For this cause came I into the world."* If he knew it, he must have expected it; and that he did so, is evident, from his saying, "He that betrayeth me is at hand,"† and, "The son of man shall be delivered,—and they shall kill him."‡ Many such passages might be produced from the Bible; but I should not have had recourse to them, had not you shown me the example.

You further observe, "*Crucifixion, or any other particular manner of dying, made no part of the sentence Adam was to suffer; and, consequently, on their own tactics, it could make no part of the sentence Christ was to suffer, in the room of Adam.*" You might have started this objection, against any mode of dying whatever; and, if he had died of a fever, you might have asked, Why was he not crucified? Christianity no where asserts *crucifixion* to be necessary, in itself, but only *death*; and, if so, crucifixion would do as well as any other. But this appears to be the manner predicted, in the Old Testament and the New, before his death took place. Hence, we read, "He was numbered with the transgressors;"§ "They pierced my hands and my feet;"|| "So must the Son of man be lifted up."¶ These, with many other passages in the Bible,

* John xviii. 37. † Mark x. 33, 34. || Psalm xxii. 16.

† Mark xiv. 42. § Isaiah liii. 12. ¶ John iii. 14.

denoted the manner of dying, which actually came to pass. In order to the accomplishment of predictions, this mode of death was, therefore, necessary; and its taking place has deprived you of many objections, of which you cannot now avail yourself.

In the same page you say, "*Every thing in this strange system, is the reverse of what it ought to be: it is the reverse of truth.*" I believe you have not yet produced any one expression from the Bible, that approaches so nearly to the reverse of truth, as what you now assert; but, as it is merely an assertion, I bid it adieu.

After exposing, with justice, the base customs of degenerate times,—“purgatory, selling of pardons, dispensations, indulgences, &c.,” you add, page 19, “*These things derive their origin from the paroxysm of the crucifixion, and the theory deduced therefrom.*” You here argue, I perceive, against what you do not understand. You create premises, to suit your own conclusion; and, charging on Christianity, the corruptions and degeneracy of those who have deserted from its principles, attempt to retort upon those principles, the very crimes they were designed to prevent. How you can conceive, that purgatory, dispensations, pardons, indulgences, &c., are deduced from “the paroxysm of the crucifixion, or the theory

deduced therefrom," I know not. There is not a more prominent feature in all the Bible, than the declaration of the imperfection of human nature; and how, as a philosopher, you can conceive, that an imperfect being can merit any thing from a perfect being, such as God is, when that imperfection is a departure from duty, is a point which I do not understand. Genuine merit, in all our relations to God, can only consist in something which justice cannot demand as a duty. Such is the merit of Christ. But man does not perform his duty; and, consequently, he cannot merit any thing from God.

In page 20, you say, "*Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent were to offer itself: to suppose justice to do this, is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself; it is then no longer justice, it is indiscriminate revenge.*" Before this question can be decided, we must inquire, What is moral justice, as it applies to God? That it must be something different with him, from what it is with us, will appear from this consideration,—God can, when, how, or where he pleases, deprive men of their lives, without any visible cause for such actions; yet God, notwithstanding this, is morally just in all his ways. Apply this to man; we cannot, consistently with moral justice, deprive men of their lives, without a previous forfeiture of the same to moral justice.

Unless the cause of death, with us, be equal to the death inflicted, the act is injustice, and the death assassination and murder; but God cannot commit murder; therefore the deprivation of life, of any of his creatures, by him, must not only be reconcileable with justice, but founded on its very principles and nature. Neither can God be guided by the same laws, nor actuated by the same motives, with which we are. To talk of laws, and apply them both to God and man, is derogatory to his nature, for the reasons assigned above; and that, which derogates from God, cannot be applied to him. The rules, which regulate his ways and conduct, in the economy of things, are such as we know little of; and what is justice with God, will, in many cases, be injustice with us. It is a principle, which must be admitted, that the same power, which has a right to establish a law, must have a right to repeal that law; but God had a morally just right to establish, both the laws of nature, and the laws of his word; therefore, he has the same morally just right to suspend, or finally repeal, either.

Nor does the exercise of this right, charge him with mutability; for, if the conduct of God invariably tends to promote human happiness, consistently with the freedom of man, his immutability must remain entire, while that end is kept in view. The mutability of man renders a change of means in God absolutely

necessary, in order to preserve the stability of his original purposes: for a uniform application of the same measures, through all the vicissitudes of human instability, instead of uniformly tending towards human happiness, must tend, in many instances, to the completion of human misery: and, in this case, God might be justly charged with mutability, in deserting those purposes and designs which he once promoted. But, in all the apparent variations which we discover, in the moral, as well as the natural world, he is no more chargeable with mutability, than the mariner, who alters his course and shifts his sails, through the progress of his voyage, to arrive at the port of his destination.

These things being premised, the question is, whether God can so far accept a vicarious sacrifice, in the person of the innocent, as to permit his mercy to interfere in the behalf of the guilty. The question is not, in the present case, whether moral justice can accept the innocent for the guilty; but, whether God, by receiving, in suffering, an equivalent for the offence committed, can, on a principle of mercy, discharge the guilty; and do this, as it relates to himself, consistently with the rectitude and justice of his nature.

As salvation is uniformly ascribed, in the Bible, to mercy, the question simply is, whether God can

possibly shew mercy, without being unjust. In the nature of things, justice cannot shew mercy; for if any act be of justice, it is no longer of mercy; nevertheless, mercy, when exercised, must be so consistent with justice, that it cannot be unjust. Now, admitting the existence of moral evil in man, and the existence of moral justice in God, it follows, that these cannot meet together, without destroying human happiness; because the two principles are incompatible with each other. To destroy this incompatibility, either moral evil or moral justice must cease. It cannot be moral justice; therefore, it must be moral evil. But, admitting that moral evil could be extracted from the human mind, without any expiation, still, the turpitude of those actions, which resulted from the evil principle, while it predominated, being a positive insult offered to moral justice, necessarily requires an expiation, in order to its annihilation. This expiation must, in order to be available, be abstracted from all evil; but, all mankind being infected by evil, no one, among the human race, was adequate to the task. It must then follow, that some other substitute must be found; and we find every necessary qualification concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ.

That moral justice is obligatory on man, must be admitted; and then it must follow, that every deviation from that principle, subjects to punishment;

this is evident, from our standing in need of mercy; and, if justice has an additional claim upon every offender, it must also follow, that this claim cannot be relinquished without an expiation: to suppose otherwise, is to reduce justice to an indiscriminate caprice. This claim must be cancelled, either by man or God. If by man, it destroys every idea of future happiness; if by God, it must be, by accepting the innocent for the guilty. But, as the hope of future happiness is not destroyed, the claim must be cancelled by God; and, consequently, it must be by his accepting the innocent in the stead of the guilty.

Nor can justice accept of an offering made by one guilty person in the behalf of another; for, wherever guilt is found, it entitles its possessor to punishment; and punishment cannot have any thing in it meritorious. Nothing but merit can be available for the guilty; and, therefore, guilt must be expiated by innocence; which innocence must be so far accepted by commutative justice, as to permit mercy to operate in the behalf of the guilty. Finally, if we allow ourselves to be guilty, and God to be just, and yet hope for happiness from him, it must be admitted, that he can accept the innocent in the room of the guilty; and, that he does, in mercy, discharge them, and render them capable of happiness, through the efficacy of suffering innocence. And, if we grant mercy to exist with God, it must be, to entitle those

who are the objects of it, to those favours, to which, through justice, they can have no claim.*

You ask, page 21, “*How could Christ make known anything to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew.*” I answer,—Christianity uniformly asserts its blessings to be of a spiritual and an intellectual nature; and, if so, it must follow, that they are capable of being communicated accordingly. To be convinced that its Author can make such a communication, you need only to appeal to his power; and to assure yourself of his willingness, you have only to consult his love. This is the doctrine of the Bible. How astonishing it is, that any person, capable of acknowledging, from rational conviction, these principles, should yet deny the effects which necessarily result from them. The blessings promised in the Bible, are no more confined to the book which records them, than the benefits of salutary laws are confined to the statute-book, which contains their precepts. God is just in the distribution of his favours; and he expects improvements, corresponding with the opportunities which he has afforded. It is in the spiritual communications of

* It is impossible for modern philosophy rationally to account for the existence of mercy in God, or to reconcile mercy with justice in him, on any other principles than those of the Christian system.

his love to the heart, that he speaks a language understood by all. This is equally intelligible to the learned and unlearned; which, you well know, science is not. From this vigorous root, practical morality springs; which will be more uniform in its nature and tendency, than that which infidelity recommends, as an effect without a cause.

I meet with but few things, worthy of observation, till page 24, where, after descanting on creation, you say, "*What more does man want to know, than that the hand or power that made those things is divine, is omnipotent; let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permit his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.*" On this, I will ask,—Where is the moral life you would infer? If your assertion be true, we may expect to find the purest morality among those tribes and nations, where Christianity has not destroyed its existence. To what nation shall we look, to discover the truth of your observation? Instead of finding morality in greater perfection, where the theory of Christianity is unknown, we perceive barbarism and ferocity to be the distinguishing features of the human mind. So insufficient is reason to the task you assign her, that, instead of finding morality mere perfect, we discover only some faint traces of a belief in a first cause; and these are founded on the grossest conceptions, and are productive of vice rather than of virtue.

Abstracted from that knowledge which the Bible communicates, idolatry, ignorance, and barbarism (except in a few philosophers) have universally overspread the world. You could hardly have advanced a sentiment more inimical to your cause.

Speaking of the Christian system, you say, "*It has put the whole orbit of reason in a shade.*" Has it, I would ask, eclipsed the reason of the Indian tribes of America, of the South Sea islanders, the inhabitants of the Mosambique coast, the uncivilized Tartars, the ferocious Siberians, or of those who people the regions near the Northern Pole? This cannot be; for, in all these places, Christianity is little known. Had reason shone brighter in those regions, where it is not corrupted by Christianity, you might then have made your assertions with more probability of being believed. I will conclude this, by saying, that the reverse is the fact; and the man, who, by a single stroke of his pen, can presume to wipe out a truth, with which the world is filled, and to the falsehood of whose assertions, millions can bear witness, must have a front sufficiently daring, to shew that the orbit of his reason, from a cause remote from Christianity, is in a shade.

From page 25 to page 31, perhaps you describe well; but you seem displeased, because the principles of Revelation are not founded on those of a triangle,

or a lever; as though faith must have right angles, duty the degrees of a quadrant, and love engross a given quantity of space. This displeasure is *human invention*, with a witness! The sciences have always been promoted by the circulation of the Bible; not as divinity, but as a system of beneficial knowledge. To this you bow with veneration; and, as a friend of science, the Bible asks you nothing more. But, as the source of divinity, it furnishes new principles, and gives a direction to the mental faculties, which cannot be measured by scientific rules. How you will apply your lever to theology, or how a triangle or mill will produce morality, I know not; but this I know, that, had you examined the principles of Christianity, with half the acuteness you have used to vilify them, reason would have taught you more reverence and respect.

In page 31, you exhibit together in a group, what you conceive to be the absurdities of the Christian Revelation; but, as you put aside these things, as matters of distinct consideration, I shall say but little about them. The arithmetic you speak of, "*that one is three, and three is one*," arises from your not fully understanding the subject of which you speak. Christians, who advocate the doctrine of the Trinity, never imagine, that *one* is *three*, or that *three* are *one*. They speak of *three* personal subsistences, in *one* undivided essence; but you ought

to have known, that the terms *three* and *one*, have distinct applications.* If they had asserted, that three essences were one essence, or that three persons were one person, they might justly be charged with asserting a contradiction. But nothing can be further from their views, on the present occasion. We scarcely know the modes of subsistence, of which even a finite spirit may be capable, without losing the unity of its essence; and, certainly, nothing but presumption, could urge us to declare, that, in a Being of unoriginated essence and perfections, a triad of persons is incompatible with a unity of essence, especially, as the supposition involves no contradiction.

* Let it not be thought, that I here attempt to give a full explication of a trinity in unity. If I could comprehend it, I would reject it; as I well know, that what I am able to comprehend, cannot be God. Until we know, what it is that constitutes essence, nature, and personality, we know not how far our own mechanism is capable of undergoing new modifications; and, if we are ignorant of ourselves, it must be the extreme of arrogance to ridicule and despise the manner of the existence of the infinitely wise God. If I know not the limits which divide identity from diversity, in created things, how can I expect to know Omnipotence? Mr. Paine can no more comprehend a self-existent Being in unity, than I can in trinity; and to make finite intelligence the standard, by which we measure Omnipotence, is to deny the existence of God: the Trinity must, therefore, be necessarily incomprehensible, although it involves no contradiction.

What you say, from hence to page 33, is a general calumny upon Christianity, of obstructing useful knowledge. In the first place, you can find nothing opposed to it in Scripture: consequently, your charge, upon this ground, disappears. Secondly, if any, who make a profession of Christianity, oppose scientific and useful knowledge, it is not because they are called Christians, but because they have departed from that system, and introduced innovations. "*The "centuries of barbarism, which," as you inform us, "commenced with the Christian system, and con- "tinued to the sixteenth century,*" you also impute to Christianity.*

* The ten persecutions, which commenced with Nero, in 65, and ended with Dioclesian, in 303, effectually put it out of the power of Christianity, to obstruct useful knowledge, during that period, if it had been so disposed; and as nothing can be more absurd, than to make this charge on Christianity, till the days of Constantine, who succeeded Dioclesian, the decay of learning, in the three first centuries, must be attributed to some other cause. Monsieur Godeau, a French author, says, that in the reign of Maximian, 1700 Christians were killed in one month; and that, in the province of Egypt alone, 144,000 were put to death, by various means; besides an amazing number, who died through excess of fatigue and imprisonment. After Constantine and his three sons, Christianity was again prevented from impeding useful knowledge, by the insidious arts of Julian, who set himself to reform paganism, and died in 363. This brings us nearly to the close of the fourth century, until which period, it was impossible for science to be obstructed by the Christian religion. I could easily trace the history

That barbarism and ignorance prevailed during the first sixteen centuries, is a fact supported by evidence, which leaves no room for doubt; but, that Christianity was the cause of this mental darkness, will require proofs of a different nature from those which you have produced. If Christianity were the cause of this barbarism, it would invariably produce the same effects. Now, it is a well known fact, that Christianity began to revive with Luther, and its vital power was never more universally prevalent than at the present time; we must, therefore, look for the barbarism of early centuries, in some other source. You know, the only way to prevent the effect, is to remove the cause. However, this barbarism has ceased, and scientific knowledge is revived; yet the Christian system is going forward, especially in those countries where scientific knowledge prevails: it, therefore, undeniably follows, that Christianity is not the cause of that barbarism of which you speak. Besides, the greatest men who have ever adorned science, flourished under the auspices of Christianity, and were the firm supporters of it. Witness Newton, Boyle, Locke, with many other illustrious names that might be mentioned, who have, under the auspices of Christianity, added more to science, than any equal number of men you

of Christianity to the present time, but the limits of this publication will not admit it.

can find in any age of the world, who have rejected Revelation. How strange it is, that you should depart from common sense, and common truth, to support an opinion, and serve a purpose! All you have said, from your not distinguishing between Christianity, and a departure from it, becomes nugatory.

How, in the name of common sense, could learning revive under Luther, whose talents were exerted in restoring primitive Christianity, the principles of which, according to your own account, were hostile to the very existence of it? Whether the ancient decay of learning be attributable to the Goths, the Vandals, or the Monks, I take not upon me to decide; but this is evident, that your observation should have been,—*Luther restored Christianity; and science fell.* Instead of this, we learn, that Luther reformed that religion, which, you say, was hostile to the arts and sciences; and that, under Luther's reformation, the liberal arts began to revive and flourish; because he established those principles which forbade them to flourish. Admirable reasoning! yet, that this is yours, see the last paragraph of page 33.

I meet with nothing worthy of further notice, till page 36, where you say, “ *I believe, that any system of religion, which has any thing in it which shocks*

"*the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.*" The objections, which are thus urged against Revelation, are also opposed to science. The astonishing distances of the heavenly bodies from each other; their prodigious magnitudes, and amazing velocities; the annual and diurnal motion of the earth; and the progress of the moon from west to east; have all something so repugnant to popular observation, and shocking to infantine credulity, that it staggers the mind, without having the advantage of recommending itself by its morality. Besides, your argument is against itself. *It cannot be true, because it shocks the mind of a child.* Is a child more capable of investigating such subjects than a man? or, is the immaturity of its intellect, a proof of superior perfections? Henceforth, let divines, philosophers, and astronomers, if they find any thing perplexing and unaccountable, no longer give way to doubts; the remedy is at hand.—Call a child. *If it shocks its credulity, it cannot be true.*

In the same page you say, "*The Christian mythology has five deities: there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature.*" I quote this only to expose it; the Bible disowns all such charges; providence and nature being only the mediums through which God makes himself known to the human race.

In page 37, you observe, “*The two beliefs, viz. “the plurality of worlds, and the Christian faith, cannot be held together, in the same mind; and he, who thinks he believes both, has thought but little of either.*” Newton thought otherwise, and so did Locke, and so did Boyle, and Bacon, and many other great men; and they thought so, from a rational conviction of the probability of both. Had you pointed out the incongruity of the two beliefs, your arguments would, at least, be entitled to a refutation; but, as you have not attempted to point out their incompatibility, it affords great room for suspecting the truth of your allegation; and, as the declaration stands, it is scarcely worth a denial.

What you say, till page 42, is scientific, and has nothing that militates against Christianity; you then observe, “*In the midst of these reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, which forms itself upon the idea of only one world?*” I answer,—We are to think, what rational beings ought to think, that

“Through worlds unnumbered, though the God be known,
“Tis ours to trace him only in our own.”

Christianity, with a modesty peculiar to itself, passes over, in silence, what forms no part of its design; which was not to establish science, but divinity, faith, and morality. Its nature, its object,

its tendency, and its end, are all founded on principles distinct from science; and, therefore, are no more to be reduced to scientific rules, than ponderosity or magnitude can be applied to virtue or vice. What would you think of a history of France or England, which founded itself upon the idea of only one nation? You would certainly think, as you ought to think, that it answered its proposed end, and treated of such things as were essential to the undertaking. If a system of geography were written before the discovery of America, would the discovery of that continent, falsify its account of Europe, Asia, or Africa? Certainly not: much less would it follow, that the discovery of America demonstrated that no such places as Europe, Asia, and Africa existed. Is Christianity false, because it delineates only such things as belong to its system? The Christian system is such, that it assigns to proper causes, the effects which result from them; but to say, it is defective, because it treats not on such things as come not within its reach, and which form no part of its contemplation, is a conclusion too absurd to name. The Christian system leaves to conjecture what belongs thereto, without affirming or denying any thing about it. You give your readers, in this instance, a proof of the fallibility of human reason; which, as it may err, is not to be implicitly trusted in matters of eternal moment, although by you it is deified.

You ask, page 42, “ *Why should we suppose, that God should quit the care of millions of worlds, equally dependant on him, to die for this? Shall we suppose, that he died for all these worlds? In this case, he would have nothing else to do, but to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, without scarcely a moment’s interval of life.* ” To this I may reply, that Christianity is now out of the question; and we enter upon that ample field, where conjecture leads the way, with probability for its guide. As to the multitude of worlds, which are scattered through the immensity of space, I doubt not that they are inhabited, although this cannot be proved; but what these inhabitants, or their intellectual endowments, are, I know not, nor do I trouble myself about them. Nevertheless, observing the constitution of our bodies to vary, in proportion to the temperature of the climates in which we dwell, it seems reasonable to conclude, that the inhabitants of planetary worlds must have the constitution of their bodies modified, agreeably to the temperature of the orbs on which they live; and, as the transition, from one sphere to another, must be very great, the same proportion must be preserved, in all their respective inhabitants. Now, as this is likely to be the case, in the material part of animated nature, why should we doubt, that God has made, and uniformly preserved, the same variation in intellectual endowments?

When I contemplate the immeasurable distance that there is, between the infinitely wise God, and the wisest man that ever lived, I immediately perceive such an amazing chasm, in the great chain of knowledge, as all the inhabitants of created worlds would not be able to supply, though every intellectual being should rise in a regular climax, and move onward, from man, toward perfection. For ought we know, amidst all the habitable worlds, which are scattered through the immensity of space, the globe which we inhabit, may contain those beings, which are the least advanced in the scale of knowledge; or, we may form a higher link, and be further advanced in the scale of understanding. But, observing the infinite distance that there is between us and our Creator, to conceive that human nature has received from God the utmost perfection, and that it has arrived at the extremity of communicable intelligence, is a piece of arrogance I will not adopt.

What the essential properties of human nature are, or how far they are capable of being modified, I know not; nor do I know, how far these properties may be subject to alterations, while they leave the link in the scale of being entire. But it appears strange to conceive, that God should make such essential differences, in the various forms of intelligent and animated beings, in the world which we inhabit, and yet preserve an invariable sameness

throughout the universe; and that nothing should approach nearer in perfection to him than man.

It is a fact, that there are but two primitive substances, with which we are acquainted, in universal nature: these are, matter and spirit: and in these two substances, all essences, of which we have any knowledge, must inherè. There is, therefore, something narrow and mean in the idea, that God neither has at his disposal, nor can create, other substances, as far removed from matter and spirit, as these are from each other; and from these substances, which we cannot name, cause new worlds of essences to arise. If this be admitted possible, new sources of intelligence will open in these ample fields, at which, even conjecture itself may be astonished.

The denomination of all distinction in species, depends on the distinct essences of their natures; but where the lines or boundaries of these species or essences begin or end, or how they lose themselves in other essences, so as to obtain a new denomination, is what neither you nor I can ascertain. To conceive, therefore, that human nature is the only one that God has endowed with intelligence, is founded on a very gross conception. What relation there is between human and angelic natures, we know not; but it may be, for aught we know to the contrary, that the human and angelic natures, are the

only ones capable of admitting moral evil; and, if so, the only ones from whom it can be extracted; and, consequently, for whom there can be any necessity of Christ's dying. And if, of two fallen natures, God has chosen to redeem one, and pass the other by, he commits no injustice to either. Be these things as they may, the Bible teaches us a modesty, that confines speculation to conjecture, abstracted from all positive assertions.

How can we conceive, that God has made no variation in the multitude of worlds which he has created, when we behold such a variety of beings in that which we inhabit, all differing in species from one another, and all rising in regular gradation one above another, in the vast chain of being, till the highest link ends in man? I conceive it possible, that, in some orb or other, the lowest degree of intelligence may rise as much above man, as he does above the next link inferior to himself; and that intelligence may rise, in regular progression, till finite comprehension may be able to discern where material loses itself in immaterial nature. However, quitting these speculations, and admitting that there is an entire sameness throughout the universe, in created things, it does not follow, that the probationers of other worlds fell, because Adam did in this; and, if not, they wanted no redemption; or, admitting that they fell, it does not follow, that

they cannot be redeemed without the death of Christ. The conditions of their allegiance might, probably, be as different from ours, as moral is from natural evil, or duration from extension, or expansion from either. I am inclined to think, that the absurdities you have advanced, would, if asserted in the Bible, be precisely such as you would wish to have before you to expose. Perhaps those things, which, with us, are moral virtues and moral vices, they can form no more idea of, than we can of a third substance, totally distinct from matter and spirit, in which unknown essences inhere.

In page 43, you say, "*But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith, that every evidence the heavens afford to man, either contradict it, or render it absurd.*" This being only an assertion, it merits no reply, but a denial. However, it so happens, that there is not one evidence in these works of God, which disagrees with the Christian system; unless you, by a new mode of reasoning, construe silence into a contradiction; or, because the language, which alludes to some phenomena of nature, is not expressed agreeably to modern discoveries, think fit to charge it with absurdity.

In the same page, you say, "*The three means which have been employed, in all ages, to impose upon mankind, are mystery, miracle, and prophecy.*"

In the first place you observe, that "*mystery cannot be applied to moral truth, any more than obscurity can to light.*" We meet in the Bible, with the *mystery of godliness*, and the *mystery of iniquity*; but the *mystery of moral duty*, if that be what you mean, by "*moral truth*," is hardly entitled to a moral name. If you can find, in all the Christian system, any thing, which calls the essential moral duties of man, *mysteries*, you will make to me a new discovery, unless mentioned in a philosophical manner; and, in this sense, every thing is a mystery. But, if by moral truth, you mean, truth in the abstract, then your assertion appears wrong. There is not a faculty of the human mind, that is not mysterious; and all its operations are equally so. How evidence can subdue judgment, and produce an alteration therein, is beyond our comprehension; yet this is a moral truth. It is also a moral truth, that there is moral evil in the world; yet it is a mystery. These are moral truths,—that we are capable of mental pain and pleasure, of hope, of fear, of joy, of grief, of reflection, and of anticipation: yet all these things are mysterious; although you say, "*Mystery cannot be applied to moral truth.*"

When any phænomenon is discovered in *nature*, abstracted from its cause, it is referred to mystery, with another name. Thus the occult among the ancients, and the primary qualities amongst the

moderns, supply that place in the natural, which mystery does in the moral world; so that, in this respect, revelation and nature go hand in hand. Before you despised mystery, you should have been certain, that the thing called mysterious, was within the reach of possible knowledge; for not till then, can you justly pass sentence. Unless you are certain of the extent of human capacity, you cannot ascertain, whether the thing called mystery has been rendered so, from the *incommunicability* of its nature, or the limitation of the human understanding. Whatever truth is not within the reach of the human powers, is a mystery; but there are many moral truths which we cannot understand; consequently, mystery *can* be applied to moral truth. It is morally true, that God is good, just, holy, &c.; but how these things are so, we know not; and, consequently, all are mysteries.

You further say, "*Mystery is the antagonist of truth.*" If so, no truth can be mysterious; but many truths *are* mysterious; therefore, your assertion is false. Whatever is a real mystery, depends upon truth for its existence; for nothing can result from nothing: it is a truth unknown that makes a real mystery. Had you said, *Mystery is the antagonist of perspicuity*, you would have nearly hit the mark; but, as the identity of truth depends neither on perspicuity, nor mystery, all you infer from

thence must be false. You have blended mystery with falsehood. Falsehood is the antagonist of truth; but mystery is not falsehood; consequently, not the antagonist of truth.

You again observe, in the same page, "*Truth never envelopes itself in a mystery.*" What an absurdity! Is the connexion between matter and spirit not enveloped in a mystery? Is the existence of God enveloped in no mystery? Is not the human understanding a mystery? Are not the motions of the heavenly bodies mysteries? In fine, is not almost every thing enveloped in mystery? And yet you, in spite of ten thousand possible demonstrations, tell the world, that "*truth never envelopes itself in a mystery.*" If truth never envelopes itself in a mystery, whatever thus envelopes itself must be false; consequently, whatever we cannot comprehend, it is our duty to reject, as false; and, if so, we must deny our own existence. However, I will dismiss the thought, with the observations already offered.

Next comes *miracle*. Although I have been examining, with all possible attention, your description of miracle, I should not have mentioned any thing about it, had it not been to avoid the imputation of passing it over in silence; for I find, in all you say on this head, nothing but ridicule and buffoonery,

unworthy, and almost incapable of admitting, a reply. Your observation on Jonah and the whale, I mention, on the same account. It is, as I observed in the beginning of this publication, calculated to excite contempt in the minds of the thinking,—an idea of your immorality in the prudent,—and a confirmation, in the pious, of those sentiments, which you calumniate, and affect to despise.

In page 47, you attempt to hold up to ridicule, what you call, "*the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and shewing him all the kingdoms of the world.*" You then ask, "*How is it that he did not discover America?*" I answer:—First, no man can rationally suppose, that this was real, literal, and personal. It was visionary; and, as visionary scenes are incomunicable, except through comparison, this is nothing more than a comparison made use of, to convey to us what would be otherwise unintelligible. Secondly, as to the discovery of America,—this expression was equally as just then, as the same expression would be now. The whole world, was denominated from what was then known; as we say, the whole world is described in a map, though there may be many islands which are yet unknown, and many parts of Asia, Africa, and America, unexplored to this day. Alexander is always represented as having conquered the world; and the Romans were said to have made the world tributary to them:

none of which expressions are to be taken in an unlimited sense of the word, but comparatively; nor can they be understood in any other sense, without using unjustifiable distortions.

You say, page 48, "*In every point of view, in which these miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary.*" First, as to the probability of miracles, you know they are always ascribed to the power of God; and, if the miracles ascribed to his power were actually performed thereby, the improbability of their reality vanishes at once. Secondly, the reality of these miracles are attested by profane as well as sacred writers; and so well satisfied were the enemies of Christianity, in the first centuries after its establishment, of their reality, that, instead of attempting to deny, they chose to attribute them to some magical or infernal power.

You seem to infer the improbability of miracles from the following observation, in page 47:—"I never saw these things, nor nature thus go out of her course, but have reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; and, therefore, it is a million to one, that the reporter of these things tells lies." This is scepticism with a witness! I never saw a battle between two armies; nevertheless, I believe such things have happened.

I never saw twenty men lie dead together; yet I cannot doubt that others have: and to reject every thing, besides what comes within the reach of my own observations, is to annihilate, at one stroke, every event that took place before I was born. I never saw a volcano, and thousands besides myself; yet, since the last eruption of Vesuvius, I have reason to believe, that millions of lies have been told: *therefore, it is a million to one, that the reporter of such eruptions told lies!* Would not any man despise such reasoning? Besides, the miracles to which you allude, were not ascribed to the eccentricities of nature, but to nature receiving supernatural impressions and impulses. To talk of "nature going out of her way," without supernatural impulses, is a contradiction in terms; and to admit supernatural aid, is to admit miracle.

However, resting this point on your own principles,—that *it is probable these accounts are false, because millions of lies have been told in the same time*, it is the same as if I were to say,—*It is very probable, that the accounts given of the miracles of Christ are true, because I have never seen them falsified in my time; and, as I have much reason to believe, that millions of truths have been told, since that time, it is, therefore, a million to one, that the reporters of them have told truths.* The only weight I would lay upon this observation---for I would

not call it an argument---is, that it is entitled to as much credit as yours, on the contrary. And, as all scripture miracles are ascribed to the power of God,---and it is admitted, that he has power adequate to the purpose,---it, follows, from the evidence on which such miracles rest, that they must be admitted on the score of probability; and as miracles were probable, so they were necessary, in the early ages of Christianity.

The propagators of Christianity had to contend with the Jewish prejudices, the Roman idolatry, and the whole torrent of Grecian philosophy; and, in addition to these, they had to combat with the arts of magic. Amidst this combination of prejudice and hostility on the one hand, and their own obscurity on the other, it became necessary, for the benefit of illiterate converts, who could not fully master the arguments on which the divinity of the system rested, and also to silence sophistical reasonings, that what they delivered in words should be substantiated by actions; and nothing could be supposed to answer such a design better than miracle. A single miracle would produce conviction sooner than a volume of abstracted reasonings; as well as silence, at one stroke, all that sophistry might urge against the propriety of Christianity. Besides, miracles were necessary, to prevent future infidels from saying, "*Christ could not be any thing more than a man;*

"for he performed no action beyond the ability of man." But now, they are deprived of such arguments; and, if any such attempts should be made, infidelity may be referred to the Bible for miracles; which must produce silence, on that head, sooner than all the arguments, and all the eloquence, which the defenders of Christianity might urge, to support their cause; and, hence, they become both probable and necessary. Your deportment in this place, seems to incorporate a strange composition of contradictions. You despise Christianity, because it does not come with a demonstration it is incapable of admitting; which demonstration, if admitted, must be miraculous; and yet you reject Christianity, on the other hand, because it is attested by miracles. You admit, that nothing can be a miracle, which is capable of full comprehension; and yet you refuse your assent, because its miracles are unaccountable.

You say, page 43, "*Moral principle speaks universally.*" So far as it is understood, I will readily grant the fact; and yet, something like miracle seems to be necessary, to ensure moral practice; for it is a truth, not to be disputed, that all men do not act in conformity to the dictates of this universal instructor. Now, admitting the truth of your observation, I think it must follow, either that all do not hear, or that all do not understand; and, therefore, either the principle or the subject must be defective. If it be

the principle, its universality is done away ; and, if the subject, the principle is inadequate to the accomplishment of its end : and, in either case, your observation falls to the ground.

Having dismissed *mystery* and *miracle*, you next attack *prophecy*. Hence, in the page last quoted, you say, “*As mystery and miracle took charge of the past, so prophecy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith.*” But, although you make this unequivocal declaration, we must not forget, what you have asserted in another place ; namely, that “*Jesus Christ called men to the practice of moral virtue, and the belief of one God.*” Now, as this description of what Christ taught, thus delivered in your own words, comes not under either of the terms, which you say, “rounded the tenses of faith,” it cannot be denied, that the universal dominion which, according to your views of the Christian faith, you have ascribed to *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophecy*, must be false.

You again say, in the same page, “*If a prophet shot within a thousand miles of the mark, posterity could make it point blank.*” If you, or any impartial man, were to read the fifty-third chapter of *Isaiah*, and compare it with the sufferings of Christ ; and read the seventy weeks of *Daniel*, and compare them with the great epoch of time in which Christ suffered ;

you will then find, that both these have shot within five hundred miles of their mark; and it must have been great disingenuity in posterity, not to have perceived it. The reason, why many things, which we find, in what are called the prophetic parts of the Bible, are obscure, is, because both the prediction and its accomplishment are past; and, therefore, are rendered equally unknown. To make every prediction speak intelligibly, must be, to make it receive its accomplishment in our day; for, without this, prophecy must necessarily be obscure; and to admit the full accomplishment of all prophecy, in modern days, is to render prophecy objectionable to all the past ages of the world, and to deprive all futurity of the means of satisfying doubtful incredulity. On every rational principle, therefore, it must follow, that, as our age is but a part of one great whole, the wisdom of the *bible-maker*, is conspicuous; for he has given, to every age, a sufficient accomplishment of prophecy to satisfy rational investigation, without depriving any other of those evidences, which rationality might with justice demand. If the longevity of man, were coeval with time, then, and then only, could we expect to see the accomplishment of all the predictions which are contained in the Bible; but then, the succession of the human race would be no more. All circumstances thus considered, it is, to me, a doubtful case, whether

prophecy can be divested of all obscurity, and yet retain its name.

You further observe, "*It has been proved, in the former part of this work, that the original meaning of the word prophet meant poet, and is changed into prophet in modern times.*" This, sir, is a mistake; you have only attempted to prove, that the prophets were poets,---which, I believe, is generally admitted,---without once attempting to prove, that they were not prophets, in the sense of modern times; and all you have left to be impressed thereby, on the minds of your readers, is, that, if it can be proved they were poets, it is a sufficient proof that they were not prophets.

From these observations, I shall turn to page 49, where you say, "*Either there were such men, or there were not.*" On this I rest it: and, although you have not drawn your own inferences,---which, in fact, you could not do, to your advantage,---I will endeavour to draw mine. If there were such men, the point is admitted; if there were no such men, there could be no such predictions, nor any such correspondence between the prediction and the event, as we find; but there are predictions, and events to correspond therewith;* therefore, there were such men.

* See page 29.

If it be esteemed rational, that man can, upon natural principles, calculate an eclipse, by looking through the progression of nature, why should it be thought irrational, to suppose, that God could unfold the human intellect, so as to look through a train of contingencies to a certain event, or inspire the same man to pronounce upon the certainty of an event, whose causes might be wholly unknown? To admit the possibility of either case, is to destroy the impossibility of prophecy; and to behold events correspond with the predictions which preceded them, is to have all the certainty of knowledge which the thing is capable of admitting.

I now turn to your last expression, or argument, with which you close your book. In page 50, your words are, “*Adam, if ever there was such a man, must have been created a Deist.*” I take it for an admitted point, that all your intelligence, respecting Adam, has been derived from the Bible; and, if so, to that account we must refer, to know whether Adam was a Deist or not. I conceive, from your book, that Deism includes, among other things, a denial of all revealed religion, abstracted from science; and, if so, Adam was not a Deist.

His history was this:—God told him, “ Of all the trees in the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not

eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Are this prohibition and this liberty consistent with Deism? If so, Deism was different, when Adam was created, from what it is now; and it is not to be relied upon. We find, however, that Adam was soon instructed in the principles of Deism. His instructor appears to be the devil, whose language was somewhat similar to what has been used by man, of much more modern date. The purport of what he told Adam was, *that this threatened curse was an imposition, set up "to terrify and enslave mankind;" —that it was a lie;—that no such thing would happen as he expected; but, on the contrary, he should be as God, and be able, from rational knowledge, to discover the fraudulent fable, and reject the imposture with contempt.* His words were, in effect, *I cannot dis honour my maker, by calling "such paltry stories the word of God;" for God knoweth, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil:—ye shall not surely die.* The event was, that Adam attended to this reasoning, denied revelation, and commenced Deist; and the consequences were,—the introduction of moral evil,—the pains and calamities of mind and body,—the misery of the human race,—and, finally, death. These are facts, which we know on this side the grave; but what awaits us on the other, abstracted from the Bible, we must die to know. This is the source of Deism, as it relates to Adam; the fatal

effects of which, you and I feel, whether we will acknowledge them or not. All, therefore, that you have said, respecting Adam being created a Deist, turns to your disadvantage, and upbraids you with the falsehood of your relation respecting him.

To adopt your own mode of expression, I will say, Adam was either created a Deist, or he was not. If not, you give up the point; if he was, his was a Deism that admitted revelation, but which modern Deism denies: consequently, Adam, in the modern sense of the term, was not created a Deist; but he became so, after his creation, by hearkening to, and following the advice of the devil; and, therefore, your observation must be false. To redeem him from this deplorable state, into which Deism had plunged him, the Saviour came down from heaven, and offered that ransom which you despise.

The last page in your book presents your readers with the most prominent features of your arguments, in miniature. You observe, that "*Human language is inadequate to the accomplishment of the purpose of revelation; and, therefore, it cannot be true.*" If this principle be admitted, no written testimony can be received; because the purpose of writing is, to convey intelligence which was not known before, or to preserve what, otherwise, would not be so permanent. If *written* testimony be rejected, because

liable to suspicion, this great medium of communication must be cut off, and *oral* testimony, must, of necessity, follow its fate; for, if I cannot believe a man's written evidence, it is not possible for me to believe his word. A principle more dangerous to civil society can hardly be imagined. It is fraught with every species of mischief. It will permit the murderer to go unpunished, and the plunderer undetected; it exposes the harmless innocent to the savage attacks of the brutal ravisher; and it opens the door to every villany.

If oral or written evidence cannot be admitted, because one thousand years old, neither can it, if five hundred, one hundred, one year, or one day: to admit a principle, is to make it of universal application. That principle, which is immoral in its nature, and pernicious in its tendency, must necessarily be bad; but these things are so; therefore, the principle must be bad. By admitting this principle, you defeat the just laws of every community, in their operations, by debarring evidence from vindicating the innocent, or criminating the guilty. These consequences being contrary to every principle of justice, the source, from which they flow, must be also unjust. If injustice be inadmissible into civil society, then that, which produces it, must likewise be inadmissible: but the one is true; therefore, the other must be also. Whatever God is the creator

of, he can make subservient to his purposes; but God is the creator of human speech and language; therefore, he can make it subservient to his purposes. Whatever involves not an absolute contradiction, God can do; but making language the vehicle of communication, involves no contradiction; therefore, God can make it the vehicle of communication. The probability of an alteration, where there is no evidence to support that probability, leaves the probability of no alteration being made; therefore, all you insinuate from hence, amounts to nothing.

You say, "*The word of God is in the creation.*"* As a demonstration of his power, I admit it; but as a system of duties, which we owe to God, and to one another, I deny it. It does not teach the moral duty, of doing to all men, what we, in the like circumstances, would wish to have returned. It does not teach us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, or to bear with the infirmities of our fellow creatures; and, therefore, it cannot be, in a moral sense, the word of God.

* I should as soon expect, that men, in general, would learn the duties of *morality*, from contemplating a hedge of thorns, a heap of stones, or a pool of water, as from the rest of creation for the things I have mentioned, are as much the word of God, as Saturn, or Sirius.

Secondly, it is not intelligible to all capacities; and, therefore, it cannot be the source of moral duties. That, of all problems, is the most obscure, which teaches moral duty, from the creation; and yet moral duty is most essential to be known. That, therefore, cannot be the teacher of moral duty, which conceals what it came to inculcate; and, consequently, creation cannot be the *word* of God.

That science has not been always understood aright, is evident, from only adverting to the systems of Ptolemy and Tycho-Brahe. If a knowledge of science be necessary to morality, then it is necessary that science should be universally known; but this is not the case; and, therefore, this could not be designed by God, as the means of communicating his will. These observations will not apply to revelation. In revelation, "moral principle speaks universally;" and, through redemption, its blessings are capable of spiritual communication. Such as have not the Bible, are a law unto themselves; and they are equally under the protection of that God, who reaps not where he has not sown, nor gathers where he has not strewed.

Finally, Christianity and Deism are like two vessels, fitted out for the same distant region; but differing in the cargoes with which they are freighted.

Christianity says, that morality is not marketable, without faith; Deism says it is, and that faith is superfluous and unnecessary. Now, admitting Deism to be right, Christianity cannot be wrong; because she, as well as Deism, has morality; but, if faith should be essential to the acceptance of morality, Deism must be wrong. This is a fair statement of the case; and, on principles of rationality, it requires no time to determine a prudent choice. I choose, for my part, to embark on board Christianity; and I sincerely wish, that I may be so faithful to its principles and practices, as to obtain, at last, my part in the resurrection of the just. And, that you, sir, though labouring to sink my “vessel in the gaping deep,” may, through that mercy which you reject, arrive safely at the haven of peace, where an extraction of moral evil from our natures, shall annihilate profaneness of sentiment, and lead us forth, to receive a common Saviour’s love, is the unfeigned wish of one, who, till that awful period shall arrive, will be, in all probability, to you unknown.

THE END.

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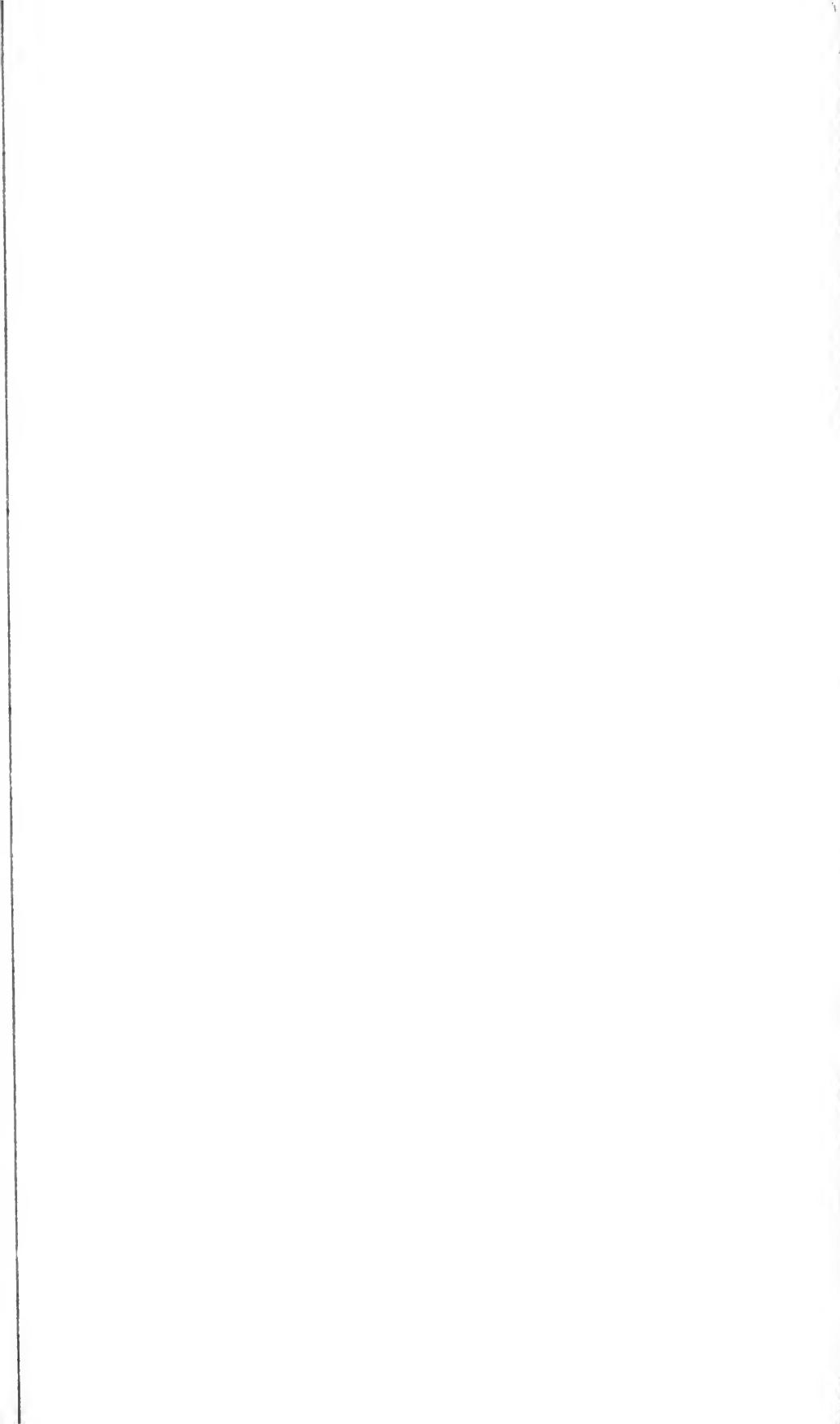
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